

PETER DREIER ON THE REDLINING MENACE

May 15 - 28, 1995

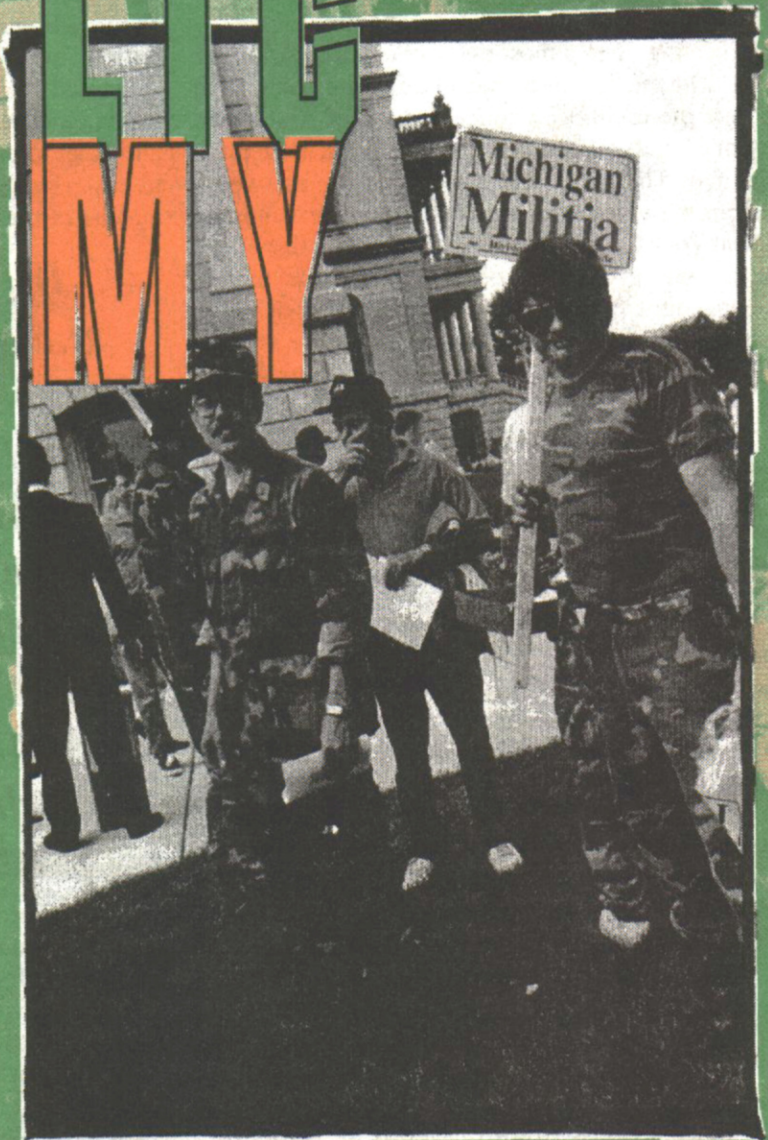
# IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

## PUBLIC ENEMY

Inside the  
mind of  
America's  
militia  
movement

By Scott  
McLemee



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# EDITORIAL

## THE MANY HORRORS OF OKLAHOMA CITY

**“W**here’s my apology?” asked Ghassan Barakat three days after the Oklahoma City bombing. Barakat, the editor of *Al Bostaan*, a Chicago-based Arabic-language newspaper, added: “I’ll be waiting.”

As this is being written almost two weeks later, Barakat is still waiting. The media and political leaders are doing their best to forget the unfounded condemnation of Arabs that they put forth, and the outpouring of hatred that their actions ignited. The major TV networks were the worst offenders, but even that paragon of “responsible” journalism, the *New York Times*, poured gasoline on the flames.

On the evening of the 19th, only hours after the explosion, CBS brought on the “experts.” Not surprisingly, experts on domestic terrorism were nowhere to be seen, but the stable of Arab-bashers were out in all their glory. Connie Chung started it off, saying that according to government sources, “It has Middle East written all over it.” Then reporter Anthony Mason, in his wisdom, recalled that in 1992 a convention of Muslims met in Oklahoma City, and while the overwhelming majority of Muslims at the convention were “not radicals,” groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, “whose charters portray America as evil,” were present, he said.

This prompted Middle East “expert” and professional Arab-baiter Steve Emerson to pontificate: “Oklahoma City, I can tell you, is probably considered one of the largest centers of Islamic radical activity outside the Middle East.” And then this insightful gem: “This was done with the intent to inflict as many casualties as possible. That is a Middle Eastern trait.”

The next morning, the *Times* picked up the theme: “Some Middle East groups have held meetings there,” it revealed, “and [Oklahoma City] is home to at least three mosques.” And the *New York Post* editorialized: “Knowing that the car bomb indicates Middle East terrorists at work, it is safe to assume that their goal is to promote free-floating fear and a measure of anarchy, thereby disrupting American life.”

Not surprisingly, the result was a wave of verbal and physical violence against Arab-Americans all across the country. As the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee reports, death threats, assaults, shootings and smashed windows were reported in Tucson, Ariz., Cedar

Rapids, Iowa, Brooklyn, N.Y., Washington, D.C., and many other towns and cities across the country. (Oklahoma and Texas were initially the most frequent sites of anti-Arab hate crimes, but they soon spread to other regions, according to the committee.) But, of course, virtually none of these episodes were reported by the media agitators who provoked them. And no apology is forthcoming.

When the bomb exploded on April 19, a few commentators noted the obvious connection to the destruction of the Branch Davidian headquarters in Waco, where 22 children died in the flames exactly two years earlier—and the possible link, as well, to the April 19 execution of Richard Snell, a right-wing extremist murderer in Arkansas. But within a couple of hours after the bombing, speculation about right-wing terrorism faded away and the Arab-bashers took over.

Fixated by the specter of international terrorism, the media ignored far-right groups at home that regard Waco and other recent events as proof of a government conspiracy to enslave us all. And as Norman Olson, self-styled commander of the Michigan Militia, said in a statement the day

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after the Oklahoma City bombing, it “must have been thought rational to at least someone who avenged an eye for an eye, the horror of Waco.”

The Oklahoma bombing, of course, is an almost incomprehensible horror, but so was Waco. At the time, we wrote that “In provoking the slaughter of 78 members of the Branch Davidian sect on April 19, the FBI fulfilled David Koresh’s prophecy of Armageddon. Trained to resist assault by a hostile government, Koresh and his followers got what they expected, but not what they deserved.” And we concluded

that while people like Koresh should be arrested, “the longer our country is dominated by those who put more faith in raw force than in building a just society, the more Koresches we will create.” (See *ITT*, May 17, 1993.)

Now we have created people who make Koresh look like a pacifist, but our leaders still do not understand. Asked about Waco on *60 Minutes* last month, President Clinton could have admitted that the assault was a tragedy that we deeply regret. Instead, in a fit of anger, he defended the raid and blamed the deaths on the victims.

Isn’t it time to stop fanning the flames? ◀

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 "...with liberty and justice for all"

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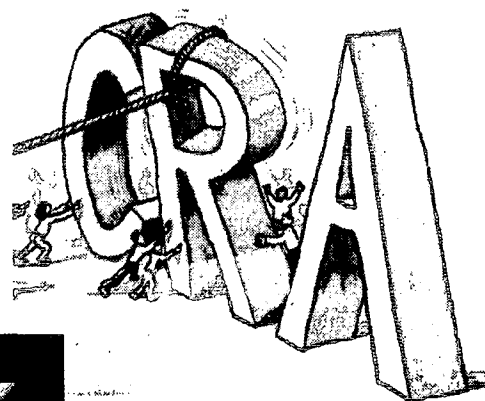
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# LETTERS

## Information is power

David Moberg's article on the AFL-CIO executive council's annual winter meeting (*ITT*, March 20) should be instructive to union members. Apparently, in a meeting of 35 labor leaders, there was no move to purchase media outlets to get labor's message across. This is strange. Surely even union leaders know that they're paddling upstream against a media that is for the most part owned lock, stock and barrel by corporate interests—and that broadcasts management's message non-stop, 24 hours a day.

The union's coffers have always been full. Why have they never purchased newspapers, television channels or radio stations? After all, it's not money down a rat hole. Profits pile up.

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland should study Pat Robertson's Family Channel. It's now the nation's seventh largest cable channel, reaching nearly 60 million viewers. Robertson's media

domain also includes the Christian Broadcasting Network (a nonprofit, tax-exempt global venture with \$1 billion in assets); a radio news service (Standard News); and a fax-based news service (ZAP).

By investing in media, Robertson has created one of the most powerful grass-roots movements in American political history. The Christian Coalition has 1.5 million members, a \$20 million budget—and influence that labor can only dream of.

The readout on Moberg's story asserts that "Dumping Lane Kirkland is the difficult first step in reviving the American labor movement." I would say that dumping Kirkland would make no difference whatsoever. The not-so-difficult first step in reviving American labor would be the acquisition of media outlets. The bottom line is that you can't get public support for a man or woman who isn't there.

In the March/April issue of *Extra!*, Beth Schulman explores the right-wing

media machine and how it's working overtime for corporate management. Compare the grants to magazines from 1990 to 1993. The total amount of grants for right-wing magazines was \$2,734,263. The total amount for progressive magazines was \$269,500. Shame on the unions.

Workers should demand that their unions begin to purchase newspapers, radio stations and television channels. Lane Kirkland could begin his resurrection by turning to page eight of the March 20 issue of *In These Times*. There he will find that the '90s Channel, a cable channel that has aired left-of-center programming, is under assault from media giant TCI. Perhaps it's time for labor to lend a hand.

F.A. Norvell  
Mendocino, Calif.

## The wrong war

I generally admire Will Nixon's coverage of environmental issues. However, I think his article "Green Day" (*ITT*, April 17) contains a recommendation that is almost suicidally wrong.

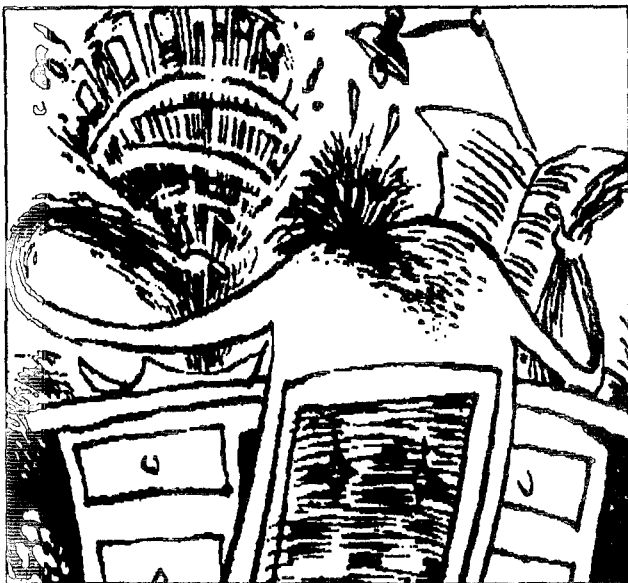
Arguing that environmental politics gains the widest constituency when its aims are simple and easily understood, Nixon cites with approval the Native Forest Council's current call for a total ban on logging, mining and grazing on public lands. Here Nixon appears to confuse "simple" with "simplistic," for what he fails to men-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander







tion is the enormous cost such a ban would have in rural areas of the 11 Western states and Alaska, where anywhere from 45 percent to 80 percent of the total acreage (depending on the state in question) consists of federal public lands.

In hundreds of small towns scattered across the West, local economies largely depend on logging, mining and grazing activities on public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management. If environmentalists could somehow goad the government into banning all extractive operations on such lands, therefore, the action might well destroy the economic basis for dozens, if not hundreds, of rural communities.

Elected officials in many such communities would lose their jobs. Many workers laid off from extractive industries would need to move, and thus would be forced to attempt to sell their homes in real estate markets where no one was buying. Local service industries might well have to close. And members of Congress who represented these towns would lose significant numbers of constituents and would face the anger of those who survived the change.

The Native Forest Council's call for ending all logging, mining and grazing on public lands appears to be a declaration of war against countless West-

ern rural communities. It's hard to see how democratic socialists and progressives—even those of us with green politics—can in good conscience endorse such a war. Whether or not such a struggle would be right on purely ecological grounds, there is very little chance that environmentalists would win it, at either the local or the national level.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of ordinary Westerners are already joining the "Wise Use" movement and trying to gut all environmental laws, beginning with the Endangered Species Act. This makes the Native Forest Council's proposal, as it has been presented thus far, exactly the wrong kind of environmental politics for an *In These Times* writer to be backing.

To the council's credit, the group did attempt several years ago to write proposed federal legislation that would have somewhat softened the impact of ending logging in the national forests. The complexity of that proposed bill made it virtually impossible to get through Congress, but at least it addressed the human side of the spotted owl controversy. If Nixon seriously thinks the proposed ban on extractive industries is a good idea, perhaps he should revisit this earlier Native Forest Council proposal and explain in an article how it might work politically and economically.

In the meantime, we should avoid supporting "simple" solutions to environmental problems that appeal to urban middle-class voters at the expense of imposing draconian losses on rural communities. In a world where trees and grizzly bears don't vote, and people do, such anti-human simplicity is both immoral and politically self-defeating.

Andy Feeney  
Washington, D.C.

## Smearing the CIA

As I sit here and read the various articles about the CIA ("Corporate welfare and counterinsurgency" and "Company men," *ITT*, April 17), I wonder whether they will convince readers that the agency is nothing but a corrupt group of people who are operating above the law. The articles target the one area of the CIA—the directorate of operations—that is the best known and most secretive. Although proponents of cutting the intelligence budget write about corruption within the operations directorate, they all too easily forget about the other areas of the CIA that have a very important function in the national security of the United States.

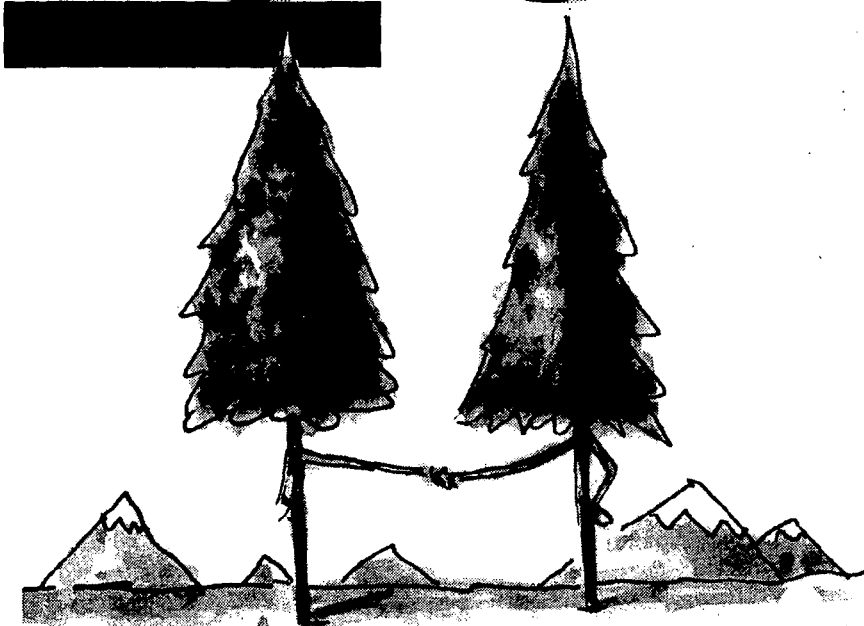
For instance, there are other directorates and offices, such as the counterintelligence center, the counterterrorist center, the counternarcotics center and the nonproliferation center. These offices along with many others have served—and will continue to serve—the interests of national security. Unfortunately, only the CIA's corrupt practices are brought to light, since all the agency's successful operations are kept under tight security for obvious reasons. To judge the CIA, or the entire intelligence budget, by the directorate of operations is like judging O.J. Simpson by just one witness.

Michael J. Liuzzo  
Mayfield Heights, Ohio

## Correction

Due to a production error two paragraphs were garbled in "Going South" by Michael T. Klare (May 1). The first 12 lines of page 24—from the words "and overt Russian aid..." to "obliged to defend Poland,"—should have been deleted. Readers who would like copies of the corrected story can write to Jim McNeill, *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

# IN SHORT



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## EARTH DAVES RULE SIERRA CLUB

In the popular view of America's environmental movement, David Brower, the "archdruid" who created the modern Sierra Club, and Dave Foreman, the most celebrated co-founder of Earth First!, have been the twin icons of immoderation. "Thank God for Dave Brower," Russell Train of the World Wildlife Fund once said. "He makes it easier for the rest of us to be reasonable." To which Brower himself later added that "Dave Foreman makes Dave Brower look like a raging moderate."

In truth, the two Daves are seasoned tacticians, not isolated idealists—which may partially explain how these unlikely candidates both won seats on the Sierra Club's 15-person board during recent membership elections. And by their public appeal and forceful personalities, the two Daves could return this organization of 570,000 members to the forefront of wilderness conservation.

Now 82, Brower ran the Club as executive director from 1952 to 1969, when membership rose from 7,000 to more than 70,000 as he led campaigns to save the Grand Canyon, California redwoods and other natural gems. Brower subsequently founded Friends of the Earth, the League of Conservation Voters and Earth Island Institute. The latter group has been his professional home since 1982, and he still launches frequent salvos from there at the Sierra Club for its failure to take bolder stands. "I won't try to be a big shot on the board," he says, "but I hope to remind them of some things that



### "Truly raped"

In the midst of a recent debate over abortion funding for poor women, one North Carolina legislator suggested the state could save money by denying funds to women who were raped—because, he argued, rape victims don't get pregnant. "The facts show that people who are raped—who are truly raped—the juices



don't flow, the body functions don't work and they don't get pregnant," state Rep. Henry

Aldridge explained. As the Associated Press went on to note, "Aldridge made the comment while trying to apologize for earlier implying that victims of rape or incest are sexually promiscuous."

### Pyongyang-a-go-go

Visitors to North Korea's much-hyped, if little-noticed, Pyongyang International Sports and Culture Festival for Peace were able to witness an opening-night display of



"Japanese professional wrestling" that owed more to the World Wrestling Federation than to the

ancient traditions of Sumo. "The opening bout ... may have looked convincing to some," Reuters reports, "but the subsequent female tag team match should have left no doubt that this was some-

thing other than pure sport. The crowd gazed in slack-jawed amazement as four Japanese women, including 216-pound Keiko 'Bull' Nakano and bleach-blonde Akira Hokuto with her trademark black lipstick, thwacked each other." On May Day, several days later, tens of thousands of North Koreans filled Pyongyang's Kim Il Sung Square to dance to songs praising leader-for-life-to-be Kim Jong Il. The object of their praise, who says he is still in mourning after the death of his father, did not attend the celebration.

## Ten Commandos

According to a list of Ten Commandments for Militia Members posted to the Internet shortly after the Oklahoma bombing, the good minuteman should exercise his mind as well as his body. In addition to predictable



commandments stressing the importance of diligent and discreet training, the anonymous author of

the Commandments included a heartfelt plea for militia literacy. "For Literacy is first among martial skills," the document explained. "Without and [sic] understanding of the philosophies of our Founding Fathers and our Constitution, a Militia is nothing more than an armed rabble, and such is easily defeated. ... Neither should you neglect the works of Clausewitz, Sun-Tzu, Musashi or von Dach because they are foreign."

### APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Models Inc.-redible!
2. Infomercial irritating
3. Plausibly deniable
4. L.A.P.D. blue
5. Bob Dole-Idious
6. Raoul Cédras-tic
7. Ollie North nasty
8. Holiday in Rwanda
9. Zhirinovskyesque
10. Where have you gone, Joe Goebbels?

used to work that they seem to have forgotten."

Foreman quit Earth First! in 1990, upset at the group's dalliance with political issues he felt were extraneous to radical conservation. He now directs the Wildlands Project, which espouses "conservation biology" and calls for giant wilderness preserves to save species that adapt poorly to human encroachment. He will bring much the same orientation to Sierra. Citing a "biological meltdown" in his ballot statement for the board elections, he vows to lead the club "to take stronger stands on wilderness, forestry and public lands." But first he has to address a more pressing problem—the malaise that has resulted from years of bitter infighting between local activists, who want "no compromise" (in the spirit of the two Daves), and national groups who favor Washington realpolitik. At the Sierra Club—which has local chapters, unlike all the other national environmental groups except for the National Audubon Society—this conflict swelled up in a 1994 ballot referendum. Angered by Sierra's reluctance to support the strongest forest and wilderness bills in Congress, a group of Club activists calling themselves "John Muir's Guardians" petitioned for a membership vote advocating a "Zero Cut" stand—that is, an end to commercial logging on public lands. But rather than letting members vote "yes" or "no" on such a proposal, says Guardians activist David Dilworth, the board drafted a similar policy with a clever escape clause that still allowed logging.

"This infighting is one thing I hope to work on," Foreman says. "Let's attack the enemy rather than other folks in the conservation movement." If the board starts to bicker, Brower promises to tell a story about people who circled their wagons against the enemy and then began firing within. "That should put a quick end to it," he says. And if it doesn't, the Sierra Club can only look forward to a Congress that has voted to suspend our national forestry laws for two years in order to double the timber sales on many national forests. A group divided over "Zero Cut" should still be able to rally against "Double Cut."

—Will Nixon

## THE DEA'S FULL METAL JERKS

For years, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has trained state and local police officers to be foot soldiers in the war on drugs. Now, veteran instructors in the agency's Midwest region are coming under fire for using the kind of sexual and violent language that has given military culture a bad name.

A federal class-action lawsuit filed April 5 by three female Madison, Wis., police officers charges that the DEA's training seminars often kicked off with obscene pep talks. "When you men get home you are going to fuck like you've never fucked before," promised a DEA trainer in introductory remarks to a Chicago session, according to the suit. "Tell your wife to wear something cheap or nothing at all because you are just going to rip it off. Get the kids out of the house 'cause it's gonna be a brutal fucking assault."

The suit accuses five agents from the DEA's Chicago office—Francis "Frank" White, Melvin Schabilion, Michael Flanagan, Saul "Buddy" Weinstein and Norbert Kuksta—of subjecting as many as 75 female officers to this kind of harassment over the last six years. The plaintiffs claim that the treatment was systematic and, therefore, that the DEA denied the women their equal-protection rights.



One of the plaintiffs, Denise Markham, was the only woman of 50 police officers at a session last September at Camp Douglas, Wis. As Markham lay prone on a rifle range during a field exercise, a DEA trainer allegedly bellowed, "I'm getting a hard-on!" and grabbed his genitals. The agent's high jinks caused "laughter among all the men present," the suit claims, but it produced the opposite effect on Markham. She felt so threatened she pushed a refrigerator in front of her barracks door at night and slept next to a loaded gun.

This isn't the first time the agency has faced such complaints. In March 1994, a House subcommittee received a scathing General Accounting Office (GAO) report based on interviews with 63 current and former DEA employees. The GAO found that the agency averaged 382 days to process internal harassment complaints, that investigations were often incomplete, and that employees were reluctant to report incidents for fear of reprisals.

The DEA launched its own probe into the Chicago team after receiving an October 31 letter from a police officer who attended a September session. But the agents were left on the job until April 10, five days after the suit was filed. The DEA gave them paid leave and transferred all but White from the Chicago office. On April 27, the agency announced that its investigation had confirmed some of the allegations and recommended "serious discipline."

"This vindicates our clients' account of what happened," says Sarah Siskind, the plaintiffs' attorney. "We hope we can work with the DEA to achieve effective mechanisms built into the training programs that will prevent this kind of conduct from ever happening again."

—Chip Mitchell

## TORRICELLI'S TURNAROUND

As the House ethics committee investigated whether Rep. Robert Torricelli (D-NJ) violated his secrecy oath by revealing the CIA's ties to a Guatemalan colonel allegedly involved in the murders of a U.S. innkeeper and a Guatemalan guerrilla leader, many observers were trying to answer a more perplexing question: Why did the New Jersey Democrat—a hard-line opponent of Fidel Castro's Cuba and no foreign policy dove—go public?

In a letter to the Clinton administration dated March 22, Torricelli, a member of the House Intelligence Committee, cited classified information showing that paid CIA informant Col. Julio Roberto Alpirez had directed the killing of American innkeeper Michael DeVine and Guatemalan guerrilla leader Efraín Bámaca Velásquez, the husband of American lawyer Jennifer Harbury (See *In These Times*, April 17). Torricelli expressed outrage "that the United States government was complicitous in these murders and continued to mislead the families and the American people."

Considering the CIA's long, sordid history in Guatemala, many human rights activists wonder what spurred Torricelli's sudden interest. Sister Alice Zachmann, director of the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission USA, noted that attempts to get the Subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs to address the issue during Torricelli's tenure as chairman were continually thwarted by "some kind of blockage."

Former CIA agent David MacMichael, a founder of the Association of National Security Alumni, offered a two-word explanation for Torricelli's recent conversion to the cause: Bianca Jagger. Jagger, a longtime human rights activist, has been the congressman's companion since 1992. Torricelli has

## MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

### Internet, Inc.

It hasn't been easy for marketers to figure out how to make money on the Internet, which was developed by computer nerds and Defense Department engineers and then spread to universities and home users. But Internet connections, mostly commercial now, are growing at 10 to 15 percent a month, and marketers are eagerly awaiting the development of secure payment systems on the net.

While we're waiting, the Internet is fast becoming a playground of leading-edge marketers. Some sites, like that of the popular magazine *Wired*, now require viewers to register and use passwords—thus becoming part of a marketers' database, and preparing the ground for future payments. Other sites are embedding advertising into home-page screens, and attaching ads to e-mail messages. After a first-generation (and non-profit) flood of sex-obsessed user groups appeared on-line, some entrepreneurs in San Diego (profiled in this month's *Wired*) are marketing interactive cybersex—an online service that allows customers to phone in requests for live performances, which are transmitted on-screen.

And for kids, Mattel has opened up a Barbie doll online service. With a whiff of mystery, the toy company promised in *Investor's Business Daily* that the service will allow children to "be able to interact with Barbie in very special ways."

Net pioneers, who are mostly noncommercial users, regard the commercialization of the Internet with horror.



But in fact, commercialization could spur the Internet's broader acceptance and use. Nonprofit users might then have wide access to low-cost communications. But there's no need to get prematurely utopian. The net's infrastructure is at the moment a battle site for corporate control, and universal service is still a dream.

Meanwhile, seize the chance to virtually hunt up noncommercial information, heralded in the latest issue of *InfoActive* (Center for Media Education, 1511 K St. NW, #518 Washington, DC 20005, [cmec@access.digex.net](mailto:cmec@access.digex.net)). From the White House to the Foundation Center, World Wide Web sites are springing up faster than you can point and click.

As they do, new problems spring up as well, including the challenge of sifting undigested information and the specter of losing access to information in its old-fashioned print form. But public-access Web sites also demonstrate the potential of "the Net" to be more than a spider's web for the marketers.

### By the way...

For a lively primer on built-in media bias, check out David Croteau and William Hoynes' *By Invitation Only: How the Media Limit Political Debate* (\$9.95, Common Courage Press, Box 702, Monroe, ME 04951, 1-800-497-3207). Bringing together three important studies conducted by the watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, the book surveys leading news and public affairs shows on television and finds that they systematically exclude left-of-center viewpoints.

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acknowledged the crucial role Mick Jagger's ex-wife played in piquing his interest, after she saw a *60 Minutes* report last November on Harbury's hunger strike in Guatemala City to call attention to her husband's plight.

The charges embarrassed the Clinton administration—which had denied having any information on the murders—and provoked House Speaker Newt Gingrich to issue an angry rebuke. Gingrich demanded Torricelli's removal from the intelligence panel if the House ethics committee determined that he had violated a new secrecy oath Congress adopted in January. Nonetheless, the disclosure has prompted both the White House and Congress to investigate the CIA's involvement in the two murders.

Torricelli admits that he violated the secrecy oath, claiming it was in "direct conflict" with the oath of office that requires him to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the country. "My duty as a citizen, a lawyer and as a member of Congress supersedes any congressional secrecy requirement," the 43-year-old, seven-term congressman argued in a letter to the House ethics panel.

But some insist Torricelli's motivation was more Machiavellian. "He is not doing this because he's concerned with people being murdered," said a staffer who works for a fellow House Democrat. "Publicity is power, and now he is in the news more than when he was [subcommittee] chairman." The most widespread speculation, however, is that Torricelli's revelations were an embarrassing "payback" to President Clinton for overlooking him when he named a new chair of the Democratic National Committee early this year.

Regardless of the reasons, Torricelli's actions have been widely applauded in Washington's human rights community. "I'm just glad he did it," Zachmann said. "I'm hoping we can keep up the momentum and do something about the human rights situation in Guatemala."

—Peter Zirnite

### Tomorrow's News Tonight

By Steve Brodner

Bomb blast unearths Hoover.  
He is spotted in DC.  
Gets old job.



# I N P E R S O N

## ASSETS FOR THE FUTURE

*Kay Camp takes stock*

Kay Camp still attends Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) meetings in the Haverford, Pa., retirement community where she now lives. "I'm not ready to resign from the world," says Camp, who left her mark on history as president of WILPF's U.S. section.

But her husband of 51 years, Bill, suffers from dementia. So these days she

spends much of her time tending to him in their home. "It's frustrating, but I manage to keep in touch," she says. Last month Camp gave a talk on WILPF to a peace studies class at Swarthmore College, from which she graduated in 1940.

WILPF was founded 80 years ago in Holland, nine months after World War I had begun. The international group of suffragists, socialists and reformers who gathered at the Hague were as opposed to the war as they were united in the belief that women had a responsibility for guarding and nurturing the human race.

Camp served as WILPF's national president between 1968 and 1971, a time when the nation was torn apart by the Vietnam War and was consumed by the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union. And as the leader of a peace group of about 15,000 American women who belonged to the U.S. branch, Camp was in the middle of it all. For her efforts she has been accused of being a communist or worse, a communist dupe. "I've been harassed many times," she says. "It is hard to remember how often and when."

In the summer of 1968, Camp was in Denmark to attend WILPF's international congress. The day the congress opened, Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia. "Some Eastern women threatened to go home," she recalls. "There was so much tension between the Eastern European delegates and the Soviets." But peace prevailed; the delegates stayed put, passing a resolution against military intervention.

She traveled to Vietnam meeting with women's groups from the North, the South and the National Liberation Organization (Viet Cong). Camp speaks of the friendship that developed with Ngo ba Thanh, the leader of the South Vietnamese women's peace group. "She was jailed in 1971," says Camp. "For two years I worked hard to get her out."

Following the overthrow of Salvador Allende in 1973, Camp and other



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## ETC.

By Dave Mulcahey

### Indexing misery

It seems that there may be a bright side after all to the low-growth economic policy America's financial elite has mapped out for us in the coming century. According to a study examining the environmental health of nine of the world's leading industrial nations, virtually the only chance the United States has of improving its overall environmental health is to maintain a stagnant economy.

The report, released in April by the Washington-based National Center for Economic Alternatives, presents an aggregated Index of Environmental Trends that tracks 21 key environmental indicators. The point is to provide a composite picture of ecological trends—much as the Consumer Price Index measures price trends—in terms of a percentage change over time.

Thanks to government intervention, some of the indicators tracked by the report have made noticeable progress in the last two decades. For example, introduction of auto emission controls, restrictions on industrial discharge and the use of smokestack "scrubbers" have dramatically reduced heavy metal pollutants in water and sulphur oxide, carbon monoxide and particulate pollutants in the air.

But, as the report points out, marginal improvements in some environmental indicators has served to mask the degradation of others. "Real trend reversals," the center warns, "have not been attained when they require substantive structural changes in basic production processes and transportation patterns, or when they involve major alterations of



consumption patterns or other significant impacts on lifestyle."

World governments show no signs that they are about to initiate such "structural changes." In the countries surveyed—with the notable exception of Japan, which offset the effects of strong growth by implementing the world's "most advanced" pollution technology—negative ecological trends were mitigated mostly by economic weakness, not enlightened government policy and good corporate citizenship. The most nettlesome environmental problems—those related to transportation, waste generation, agriculture and chemical manufacture—promise to thrive with a vengeance if robust growth returns to the world's industrial economies.

The United States is a perfect illustration. Impressive air and water-quality improvements between 1970 and 1990 were matched by sharp increases in waste generation, chemical manufacture and automobile use, producing an overall index rating for that period of -22.1 percent. Extrapolating from government statistics, the report estimates that if the U.S. economy had experienced 4 percent annual growth in the period from 1970 to 1990, the overall index rating would have been an alarming -45.0 percent, whereas a zero-growth economy would have seen a 4.5 percent index improvement.

The findings of the NCEA are not an argument, of course, for maintaining low-growth economic policies. They merely demonstrate the need for a fundamental reorientation of modern industrial economies, an idea light years ahead of Gingrichian futurism.

WILPF members visited the Chilean ambassador to the U.N. to ask about rumors of a bloodbath. She remembers, "The ambassador said, 'If you were there you would see for yourself.' And we said thank you, we accept your invitation." When Camp and her fellow fact-finders arrived in Santiago, they were greeted with a newspaper article ridiculing "these ladies who had come to count the buckets of blood." But the article also included the name of the hotel where they were staying. And when night fell, families of the victims arrived at the hotel to give private testimony. When she returned to the United States she testified before Congress and the U.N. on the situation in Chile.

Camp made a run for Congress from a suburban Philadelphia district in 1972, and did as well as McGovern in the district. She has since traveled as a citizen-diplomat to Tehran, in 1980 after the hostages were taken, to Central America three times during the '80s, and to Iraq the week before the Gulf War broke out.

All in all, Camp has ventured quite far from the New Jersey farm where she was raised by conservative Republican parents.

Through the 1950s, Camp, wife of a doctor and a mother of three boys, fulfilled a traditional role as she volunteered on the side for the World Federalists and the Friends Peace Committee. In 1963 she read Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and her world has not been the same since. "I recognized myself on every page of Betty Friedan's book," says Camp. "She didn't convert me, but she let me know who I was."

A feminist awareness helped Camp articulate the importance of women demanding a voice in decision-making. Women, she says, are more sensitized to social issues, having been the underdog all these years, and often the victims of violence. It was Camp who coined the WILPF slogan, "Listen to women for a change."

"Until we do achieve equality it is important to remind women of their responsibilities and their rights, and not be co-opted by the present male-dominated system," she says. "Groups like WILPF are very relevant today, and will be well into the future, since I don't think we are going to achieve partnership with men any time soon."

But men aren't Camp's primary concern; she is more worried about the future. "We have deteriorated a great deal in terms of our ideals," she says. "The whole emphasis on increasing the death penalty. The failure of health care reform. The things our children are not learning in schools—and are learning from television—are pretty discouraging. We have been zombied out by the press' failure to present the issues. The whole idea that we are entering the information age without much concern about who controls the information is pretty frightening. I think the only way to have a society operate is the democratic way, but people must be well informed for it to work. Frankly, the only hope I see is in magazines like *In These Times*, and the growing grass-roots recognition of what is at stake."

If Camp has a religion, it is the belief in what she describes as "a sense of relationship to people around the world, a sense of relationship to the past and to the future." And her faith in the power of those relationships provides solace.

She has seven "wonderful" grandchildren. "They are going to be fine," she says. "I worry about the situation in which they are going to have to live, but I am sure they are going to do something positive. They will be assets to future generations."

—Joel Bleifuss

(Women's International League for Peace and Freedom can be reached at 1213 Race St, Philadelphia, PA 19107. (215) 563-7110.)

# THE FIRST STONE

## BREAST CANCER BATTLES

By Joel Bleifuss

**T**his year about 180,000 women in the United States will find out they have breast cancer. About 50,000 women who have been fighting the disease will die. The typical American woman now stands one chance in nine of contracting breast cancer. In 1960, her odds were one in 20.

What's going on? According to epidemiologists, 35 percent of all breast cancer cases can be statistically attributed to known risk factors, such as heredity, the age of menstruation, the onset of menopause, the timing of pregnancy, etc. That leaves 65 percent of breast cancers without attributable cause. An increasing number of scientists—research in hand—are convinced that environmental factors account for many of those unexplained cases. And that awareness is fueling a political movement of women who are demanding that environmental pollution must stop.

As if to underscore the movement's importance, experts from the corporate and government sectors—particularly the Chemical Manufacturers Association and the National Cancer Institute—have launched a counterattack, arguing somewhat patronizingly that science, not emotion, must set national cancer policy.

The idea that pollution affects human health is not new. Rachel Carson warned that all was not well in her 1962 best-seller *Silent Spring*. Carson, who would soon die of breast cancer, wrote: "As the tide of chemicals born of the Industrial Age has arisen to engulf our environment, a drastic change has come about in the nature of the most serious public health problems. For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subject to contact with dangerous chemicals."

Environmental factors that are suspected culprits in the breast cancer epidemic include dioxin, which can be traced back to chlorine industrial processes; low- and high-level

radiation; and chemicals in many household cleansers.

Since the '60s it has been known that chlorinated pesticides—such as DDT, chlordane, aldrin and heptachlor—can cause breast cancers in rats. And increasingly, researchers are establishing strong links between pesticide use and human cancer. In 1993 a team of researchers led by Mary Wolff, a doctor at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, reported that women with breast cancer had higher concentrations of DDE—a byproduct of DDT—in their bodies than did women without breast cancer.

Wolff wrote in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*: "The upward shift [in breast cancer] is also consistent with the historical pattern of accumulation of organochlorine residues in the environment. ... Our observations provide important new evidence relating low-level

environmental contamination with organochlorine residues to the risk of breast cancer in women. Given the widespread dissemination of organochlorines in the environment, these findings have immediate implications for public health intervention worldwide."

The *Journal* editorial that accompanied Wolff's article said her findings had "extraordinary global implications" and argued that Wolff's "study should serve as a wake-up call for further urgent research."

Fearing the implications of Wolff's research, corporations that make and market chlorinated pesticides moved quickly to discredit it. An article in the summer 1993 issue of *Priorities*, a magazine published by the industry-funded American Council on Science and Health, warned: "Policy-makers need to decide if searching for 'toxic phantoms' will be a fruitful endeavor or yet another unnecessary burden on our public health research budget. ... It is crucial that research dollars not be redirected toward relatively low-priority fields at the expense of programs that directly benefit the breast cancer patient."

Of course, the council's *raison d'être* is not to defend "the breast cancer patient" but to advance the interests of its funders—which include, among many others, the Chemical Manufacturers Association.

A crucial ally in industry's fight is the American Cancer Society (ACS), the richest charity in the United States. The ACS, which receives substantial corporate funding, has long denied that environmental pollution plays any significant role in our national cancer epidemic.

A 1993 story in *Legal Times* revealed how the ACS was enlisted to refute a March 1993 *Frontline* documentary hosted by Bill Moyers that explored the threat pesticides pose to children. *Legal Times* reported that the public relations firm of Porter/Novelli—which represents produce growers and



distributors, as well as pesticide manufacturers such as Du Pont—sent industry's rebuttal of the *Frontline* program to the ACS. For almost 20 years Porter/Novelli had been doing pro bono PR for the ACS. Now it was payback time.

The ACS then sent a strikingly similar rebuttal to its branch offices explaining how to respond to the issues raised by Moyers. The ACS guidelines, which contained talking points identical to those being pushed by industry, claimed, "The program makes unfounded suggestions ... that pesticide residues in food may be at hazardous levels."

One of the most promising developments challenging the industry's domination of the cancer debate has been the establishment of the Women's Environmental and Development Organization (WEDO). The group was founded in 1993 by Bella Abzug, who, as a congresswoman from 1971 to 1977, represented both Manhattanites and milliners.

In February 1994, WEDO and Greenpeace, along with many grass-roots breast cancer and environmental groups, began a campaign called "Action for Cancer Prevention." At a planning meeting in Austin, Texas, the campaign adopted a statement that read in part: "We are initiating a worldwide campaign to take action to prevent cancer—particularly breast cancer—as well as other diseases caused or triggered by preventable environmental factors. ... We demand accountability from corporate polluters who are sacrificing the health of millions for billions in profit. As a beginning, we seek the phaseout of the entire class of chlorinated organic chemicals and an end to the production and use of all nuclear power and weapons."

But as WEDO and Greenpeace began organizing, so did the Chlorine Chemistry Council. At a September 1994 meeting of the council's "Chlorine Chemistry Champions," representatives from chlorine-connected industries heard from a variety of PR strategists, opinion research specialists and communication coaches. (See *The First Stone*, March 20 and April 3.) According to a source at that meeting, who asked not to be named, the Chlorine Champions were warned by Jack Franchetti, a "spokesperson trainer" from the PR firm of Ogilvy Adams & Rinehart, to prepare for "anticipatory issues" that will soon become news, one of which was breast cancer.

In Franchetti's workshop on message delivery, he told the Chlorine Chemistry Champions how to respond to public relations problems posed by breast cancer. That strategy included the following four points (the parenthetical comments are my own):

1. "Headline" the fact that there are conflicting studies about the role chlorinated compounds play in causing cancer. (Of course, the studies that vindicate those compounds are done by industry.)

2. "Admit the point" that the environmental connection to breast cancer is a complex issue that needs research. (This buys time since there is always more research that could be done.)

3. "Support" more research examining how personal lifestyle choices increase cancer risks. (This obscures the role of industrial pollution and blames the victim.)

4. Finally, "conclude" with the fact that we in the chlorine industry "are as concerned as everybody else and we are working to find out what is going on." (Another delaying tactic, since they'll work till hell freezes over.)

With this four-point strategy in hand, industry leaders were ready to counter the environmental awareness that the Action for Cancer Prevention had hoped to generate at three breast cancer conferences last fall in Albuquerque, N.M., Dayton, Ohio, and Boston. In my next column, I'll explore industry's attempts to waylay the campaign; I'll also examine Action for Cancer Prevention's future plans. ◀

(Action for Cancer Prevention can be reached at 845 Third Ave., 15th floor, New York, NY 10022. (212) 759-7982.)

## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



**TERRORISM**

# Public enemy

# W

***The Oklahoma City bombing has exposed the volatile ideology of the U.S. militia movement.***

**By Scott McLemee**

With more than 40 women's clinics bombed since 1977, right-wing terrorism ought to be a widely acknowledged fact of American political life by now. In fact, information on manufacturing fertilizer bombs—like the one used on April 19 at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City—can be found in a manual distributed by Army of God, a highly secretive anti-abortion group that bombed clinics during the mid-'80s. Yet the national psyche has seemed unwilling to confront the reality of domestic terrorism.

The explosion that destroyed the federal building, however, was almost certainly the work of a

paramilitary cell from the self-described "unorganized militia" movement—a right-wing current that has rallied around April 19 as a symbol of government tyranny and citizen resistance.

In the aftermath of the bombing, the media has scrambled to provide information and analysis on the militias. Yet those who study the right wing have been aware of the movement's growth for roughly a year; and in talking with activists and researchers who have been monitoring the militias, one soon detects a note of frustration in their voices. After all, they spent months warning about the emergence of paramilitary units in dozens of states across the country. And as observers from Georgia to Montana noted, individuals with deep connections to the racist right have played a significant role in the growth of the movement.

Those who have closely observed militia activity suspected it was only a matter of time before some act of political violence occurred. But no one quite expected an incident of the magnitude of Oklahoma City.

Given the enormity of that event, it was not surprising that the media, after largely ignoring the militia movement, would tend to label its adherents "extremists." Yet many people who study the right find it unwise to treat the militias as the "lunatic fringe" of an otherwise "respectable" conservative movement. Its issues, strategies and rhetoric overlap with those of "mainstream" right groups. And the movement will still be around after the cameras and reporters have gone.

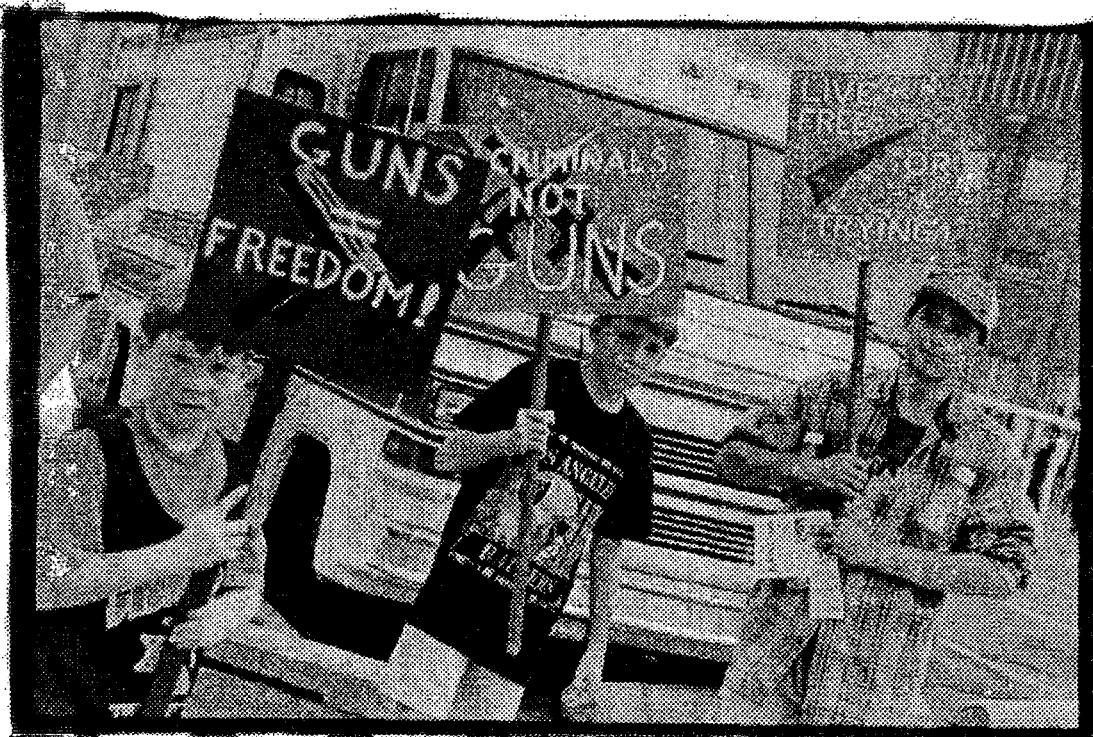
Perhaps the most difficult thing to convey about the militia is the paradoxical *newness* of this movement. Paradoxical, because the militia has deep roots in traditions of right-wing paramilitarism—and many of its preoccupations are rooted in classical themes of conservative anger at big government, sifted through the paranoid filter of conspiracy theory. Yet these old themes have been put together in an innovative and powerful way. The militias have taken shape as a *movement*, not an organization—and various currents within the militias fuse and overlap in different combinations.

Militia ideology links up age-old visions of worldwide conspiracy and race war with the newer ideologies of the anti-abortion and anti-environmentalist movements. And unusual interpretations of the Bible and the Constitution

*The bomb that shattered the federal building in Oklahoma City focused national attention on America's militia movement. In the following article, In These Times contributing editor Scott McLemee—who has written about the far right for Covert Action Quarterly, The New York Times and Against the Current—describes the growth of this violent new formation, paying special attention to the insights of activists and researchers who have monitored the militias while most of the media ignored them. This article was made possible by a grant from the Funding Exchange.*



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Young weapons enthusiasts demonstrate at an August 1994 rally in Lansing, Mich.

times, a doctrinal free-for-all. And that makes generalizing about militia ideology a somewhat hazardous business.

The militias first began springing up in early 1994, rallying to fight the outrages of the Brady Bill—the first federal gun-control legislation to become law. They took as their charter the Second Amendment to the Constitution: “A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.” The militias advocate what Dennis Henigan of the Center to prevent Handgun Violence has termed “the insurrectionist theory of the Second Amendment.” In its literature, the Militia of Montana insists that the “right to bare (sic) arms” requires preparation “to use them in military confrontation. Not just pack them around the house, yard or forest.”

But this preoccupation with the Second Amendment is only part of a much more comprehensive legal theory called “Constitutionalism,” which often resembles the “states rights” arguments of the old white supremacist movement. “Constitutionalists” distinguish carefully between “White Common Law Citizens of the State” and those inferior Americans whose citizenship was conferred by the 14th Amendment (the one extending constitutional protection to newly freed slaves).

Constitutionalism does far more than merely reinforce racist views within the militia movement: It underwrites an individualist philosophy espousing the virulent hatred of

have found new audiences among the tens of thousands of people in and around the militias. It seems, at

tutionalists and “unconstitutional” civil authority more or less inevitable.

The movement’s theology is every bit as innovative as its legal theory. Its religious outlook is emerging as an important link between the militias and the violence-prone wing of the anti-abortion movement, which in turn moves them closer to the pale of the mainstream right. Adherents of Christian Identity—a white-supremacist theology that regards Jews as “the seed of Satan” and non-whites as “pre-Adamic mud people” without souls—have proselytized within some militias. According to Tom Burghardt of the Bay Area Coalition for Our Human Rights, Identity followers are a growing presence within the anti-abortion movement.

Likewise, the Christian Reconstructionism movement—which advocates religious dictatorship, with the death penalty for homosexuals, among others—is another theological current within the campaign against reproductive choice. Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, has recently been working with the Reconstructionist-linked U.S. Taxpayers Party, which supports both the killing of abortion doctors and the growth of local militias.

Fred Clarkson, of Planned Parenthood’s Public Policy Institute in New York City, argues that the anti-choice movement has been critical in the formation of various militias. “All are anti-abortion, period,” he explains. “There is some networking between the militias and the anti-abortion movement, though it isn’t clear how much. People come to it with different ideologies, but it would be a mistake to see this as a *secular* right-wing movement. It’s religious, varying from white-supremacist theology to ordinary Baptist fundamentalism.”

There is a religious dimension, too, in the militia's fear of the United Nations. Pat Robertson's best-selling book *New World Order* explained to millions of readers the role of the U.N. as a tool of the various secret societies now controlling the world. The United Nations, never popular in conservative circles, has taken the place formerly occupied by World Communism in the demonology of the right.

As political issues, gun control and the United Nations might not seem to have much in common. But to militia members the link is obvious: both represent attacks on freedom, violating the sovereignty of the individual and the nation, respectively.

For the Militia of Montana, at least, the Brady Bill is an integral part of the worldwide conspiracy. The group's literature quotes Sarah Brady—whose husband, Press Secretary James Brady, took an assassin's bullet meant for Ronald Reagan—as saying, “Our task of creating a *socialist* America can only succeed when those who would resist us have been *totally disarmed*.” It is the sort of spurious quote that once circulated in anti-Communist tracts; there, it was attributed to Lenin, or Kennedy, or Gus Hall. But now, without the threat of “the international communist conspiracy” as an ideological glue, right-wing ideologues have had to improvise.

Substantial militia organizations began appearing in Michigan and Montana early last spring. By the summer, militia organizers were attracting hundreds of participants to meetings. The gatherings typically included lectures and videotapes concerning the Federal siege that ended in the fiery deaths of 78 Branch Davidians at their compound in Waco on April 19, 1993. According to Beth Hawkins (who did some of the earliest reporting on the movement for Detroit's *Metro Times* weekly newspaper), by fall 1994 the Michigan Militia “credibly could claim 10,000 members, the vast majority of them drawn to the group because its leaders described it as a forum to protect the Second Amendment.”

It has proved difficult to estimate the size of the movement nationally. There have been reports of militia organizations in every state except Hawaii—though in some cases, the “organization” may consist of little more than an irate citizen with a post-office box. Observers estimate that militia members nationwide number in the tens of thousands, though such figures overlook the much larger base of those who support the militias, even if they do not join.

To judge from its literature, videotapes and public meetings, the overwhelming majority of members are white working-class or lower-middle-class men. There is no central organization, though several federations or networks link them. Indeed, part of what makes the militias attractive to recruits is their highly decentralized form of organization—the very opposite of the federal tyranny they are designed to fight. Local militias are connected up nationally by computer bulletin boards and fax networks (see accompanying story) and at least some encouragement for the

militias comes from talk radio.

In Colorado Springs, Colo., talk-show host Chuck Baker found in the militias his way to outrush Rush Limbaugh, as Leslie Jorgenson reported in a recent issue of *EXTRA!* Last summer, Baker added a new sound effect to his radio program: the “kching, kching” of a firing pin. “Suddenly, Baker began discussing the need for an armed revolution to take out the ‘slime balls’ in Congress and bureaucrats ‘who are too stupid to get a job.’”

Additional support for the militias came from the “Radio Free America” show, hosted by Tom Valentine, a supporter of the Liberty Lobby, an anti-Semitic “populist” group based in Washington, D.C.

By early fall of 1994, the Liberty Lobby's widely circulated tabloid *The Spotlight* ran regular articles claiming that United Nations troops were being deployed throughout the Midwest and Southwestern United States. In Arizona, as the lead headline on September 12 read, “Armed Patriots Confront UN Unit”—one of several reports on alleged encounters between militias and foreign troops. At an October rally in Lansing, Mich., hundreds of militia members gathered to protest the raising of a U.N. flag at a city hall.

Throughout the militia movement, accounts of mysterious “black copters”—also part of the reported U.N. maneuvers—began to circulate. “They have been chasing people, hovering over houses, following cars on the roads, killing birds and cattle, and pointing what appeared to be guns at people,” as *The Spotlight* recently explained.

As such reports multiplied, some sectors of the movement wanted to quit drilling and begin to fight. In September, near Lansing, police stopped a car that had been weaving across the road; inside, they found three militia members wearing blackface and camouflage, carrying night goggles, semiautomatic weapons and 700 rounds of ammunition. That same month, Linda Thompson—an Indiana attorney and self-proclaimed Adjutant General of the Unorganized Militia of the United States—called for armed “patriots” to descend on Washington, D.C., and mete out rough justice to the “traitors” in Congress.

Thompson calculated that, out of 2 million U.S. troops, half were abroad, and half of those remaining weren't trained for combat. “The best [the government] could come up with, of all the troops they could muster, would be 500,000 people,” she explained on Chuck Baker's radio show. “They would be outnumbered five to one, if only one percent of the country went up against them.”

This was the first call for national action by the militias. Since Thompson is a prominent figure within the movement, her call to arms was widely discussed among militia members.

Thompson also set the important precedent of using Waco as a rallying cry in the war on government. The videos circulated by her American Justice Federation portrayed the siege at Waco as an early battle between oppressed citizens and federal tyranny; these tapes were a staple of militia recruitment around the country. But



Thompson's insurrectionary arithmetic failed to persuade many people that the time had come. Plans for the September mobilization quickly fell apart.

The proposed march on Washington by armed militia

supporters raised misgivings within the far right—even among those who agreed entirely that a worldwide conspiracy was ready to make America into a totalitarian state. Yet the movement continues to circulate manuals that laud the

use of force to protect individual freedoms threatened by government.

"A public-relations announcement may or may not be necessary after an assassination or a failed attempt," the *U.S. Militiaman's Handbook* by Dan Shoemaker helpfully advises. The same book provides the words to be read on another special occasion the militiaman will, presumably, face sooner or later: "You (call the prisoner by name, if you know his name) have committed treason against the United States Constitution and against your fellow citizens and members of the United States Militia. You are now executed."

Despite the movement's paramilitary orientation, it is making steady inroads into a broader political base and even finding allies among some elected officials. A recent development among militia supporters, according to Noah Chandler of the Center for Democratic Renewal in Atlanta, is the series of "patriot conventions" held by various local militias around the country. He sent me the program for the Restore Our Liberty Convention held in Atlanta in mid-March. Among the featured speakers were state senators from Colorado and California, members of

## CyberHate

When the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City blew up on April 19, a series of smaller explosions of right-wing hate speech erupted on the Internet. And the media, suddenly attuned to any trend that could be linked to militia-style political violence, decided it had found a smoking keyboard. "On the Internet," a banner headline in the *Chicago Tribune* proclaimed, "extremists spread hate with every keystroke." On Capitol Hill, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) waved a handful of computer printouts and complained about bomb recipes readily available online—and then, with no particular sense of irony, rattled off some of the details for anyone taking notes at home.

Certainly the Internet doesn't lack for right-wing extremists. Usenet newsgroups, from "talk.politics.guns" to "alt.politics.nationalism.white," often teem with explicitly racist hate speech and talk of global conspiracies—involving everything from U.N. "black helicopters" scouring the countryside to old standbys like the International bankers.

A few online have come close to endorsing the bombing itself. In a message entitled simply "KABOOM!!!!," one newsgroup contributor commented that it was "a real injustice that white children had to be injured and killed in this attack on the ZOG's [Zionist Occupation Government's] Okla. H.Q. [May this] be a wake up call to the citizens of a nation which has been culpable in the bombing of children for more than fifty years."

Readily accessible sites on the Internet's World Wide Web are entirely devoted to the most extreme expressions of bigotry, from the Stormfront White Nationalist Resource Page to a site simply called CyberHate. Visitors to the David Koresh Foundation page are treated to an elaborate conspiracy theory in which the raid on the Branch Davidian Compound in Waco was an attempt to silence a prominent critic of "the Jewish plan for a One World Government, and the Jewish plan for human enslavement." The raid, the document goes on to explain, was initiated by "Janet Reno, a Jew who has connections with the ADL [Anti-Defamation League]."

The Oklahoma bombing inspired similarly paranoid reasoning. Many blamed the U.S. government, arguing that the bombing was a kind of "Reichstag fire"—that is, a bombing orchestrated by the Clinton administration to make racist extremists look bad. A contributor named John Delany claimed that Clinton himself had ordered the bombing as an excuse to impose a "Socialist/Communist 'Utopia'" on the country. Delany advised freedom lovers to respond by stockpiling guns and ammo.

And still other users embroidered the alleged bombing conspiracy with outlandish details. Some suggested that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), expecting an attack, had used the Oklahoma City federal day-care center as a kind of "human shield" to protect the agency from terrorists; others even suggested that the ATF, as one posting put it, "had warnings about the bombing and collectively took the day off—yet failed to alert others in the building, particularly those in the day-care center."

While for every such outlandish opinion there was an equal or greater response from others offended or angered by such allegations, the conspiracy theorists were effectively able to frame the debate. The discussion looked like an exaggerated electronic version of *The McLaughlin Group*, in which the last word falls not to the most eloquent or the most informed but simply to the person with the most endurance.

That distinction, however, escapes many journalists and political leaders, who can't resist the alarmist impulse to blame the medium for a message that almost all, online and off, find abhorrent. As Andrew Kantor, senior editor at *Internet World*, notes, right-wing terrorists may or may not use the Internet. But they certainly use other communication technologies—the telephone, for example. "Maybe we should require a license for that," he comments sardonically. "I wouldn't ask about terrorists using the Net any more than I'd ask if they use telephones, paper mail, or smoke signals."

—David Futrelle

both houses of the Georgia legislature, a Nevada county commissioner, and a retired member of the Washington state supreme court.

Recent "patriot conventions" show that the movement, though purposely decentralized, may be inching toward some kind of political expression. As Chandler stressed, "Local militias don't affiliate the way other groups might, to form a national organization. But you do have people traveling across the country to attend these events. That way they can keep the aura of the 'unorganized militia,' yet be connected up."

Before April 19, it was easy enough to ignore people who believed that U.N. troops would shortly be imposing martial law on the United States. Such a movement, no matter what strange plans it makes, is distant enough from ordinary life to be no part of reality as we know it. Not so for Ken Toole, a progressive organizer I spoke with by phone in late April. He works out of the office of the Montana Human Rights Network (MHRN), which is located in the city of Helena on a street called Last Chance Gulch.

Around 2,000 members of MHRN conduct educational programs against racism and intolerance throughout the state. The network also publishes a newsletter reporting on developments in Montana and nearby Idaho (home of several far-right groups). At the start of its work five years ago, the network quickly drew the ire of the Christian Right. But things got worse in early 1994 when the Militia of Montana (which sports the heartwarming acronym MOM) came on the scene.

Initially, Toole says, meetings held around issues such as the Brady Bill and the Waco siege drew large audiences throughout the state. One gathering at Kalispell in early March attracted 800 people; at least five other meetings in cities and towns throughout Montana during the first half of 1994 had 200 or more participants. As the Network reports in *A Season of Discontent: Militias, Constitutionalists and the Far Right in Montana*, "After being exposed to the more extreme positions of the organizers, the number of people who come to a second or third meeting tends to drop off."

Even so, by late spring 1994 a hard core had formed around the Trocchmann brothers, John and David, who had previously been active in Aryan Nations—an anti-Semitic and white supremacist religious group that has in recent years devoted considerable energy to missionary work among skinheads.

The Trocchmanns say there are 10,000 members in MOM—a figure state militia leaders seem fond of claiming. I asked Toole for the Network estimate. After some hesitation, he guessed that there could be as many as 500 militia members in the state, not counting sympathizers who don't actually belong. Montana has more than its share of far-rightists, including Klan members, tax resisters and "Constitutionalists" who hold court to try and sentence government officials they find traitorous.

The size of the organization may be an open question, but MOM is without a doubt one of the main sources of literature for the militia movement nationally. MOM advertises its material in *The Spotlight*, including a videotape suggesting that the government is training the Crips and the Bloods to confiscate the weapons of (white) Americans. MOM says it can fax information to half a million militia followers in 30 minutes through its Patriot Fax Network. Indeed, the editor of one militia newspaper, *Veritas*, complains of arriving at the office to find pages of unsubstantiated rumors pouring off the fax machine, with "the large black letters MOM staring up at me" from the pile.

As Toole describes it, the militia has made intimidation of the MHRN a small but regular part of its work. He tells of how, during the spring of 1994, a public school administrator and some teachers in a small town invited the network to give a couple of background presentations on the religious right. Throughout the day, he found picket lines of 30 or 40 people—including militia members who, along with supporters of the White Aryan Resistance, showed up at meetings to videotape participants and filibuster. Over the last year, this has become a fact of network life: fairly low-key but persistent harassment of both activists and those who attend the meetings.

Toole sounds a lot more cheerful than someone in his position has any reason to be. He suggests that it would be good for me to talk to someone involved in local network activity, and directs me to Carlotta Grandstaff, who lives and works in Hamilton, a small city of around 20,000 people.

Like Americans across the country, Grandstaff had been following events in Oklahoma and the national coverage of the militias. Throughout our phone interview she spoke, much as Toole had, of the militias' steady war of nerves—but only when discussing the media did she seem actually to get annoyed. The mainstream media's message in the wake of the bombing appeared to be that people outside the Eastern cities were all right-wingers or gun nuts. "The militias," she said, "have been very intimidating to ordinary people out here."

And even after the bombing, the images of the militias on television seemed to trivialize the movement. "It's not a bunch of guys running around in the woods with guns, playing GI Joe on the weekend," she insisted. "It goes a lot deeper than that. They really think that they are saving the world from the evil federal government."

The Hamilton chapter of the network formed in response to Aryan Nations activity in the area. When MOM began recruiting around the state last year, Grandstaff says, many Hamilton residents looked to the network for some kind of response. The group gathered 900 signatures on a petition, published in the local newspaper, denouncing the threat of violence the militia posed. Then, this March, the network organized a Community Unity Day to promote tolerance and democratic values. Even though it was very quickly put together, it drew 200 people—including some militia mem-

bers who heckled. Few of the monthly meetings are held in public anymore; otherwise, right-wingers "just show up and filibuster."

A militia member, Al Hamilton, charged last year with felony intimidation of a district judge, is due to be released on bail shortly. Grandstaff mentions the fear that, once released, Hamilton and his associates in the North American Militia may provoke some confrontation with the police or the state. A letter written by the Indiana-based North American Militia had denounced the judge as a "corrupt official" who "might take notice when you see officers return in body bags."

Everyone now wonders about the future of the movement. But experienced militia-watchers are quite reluctant to speculate about the direction it might take next. The phenomenon is simply too diverse and complex, and the situation after Oklahoma too volatile. "What's interesting to me about this development, the militia movement, is that it is developing," Fred Clarkson of Planned Parenthood said. "It's a dynamic process, not a static thing. It's less than two years old, and it's changing all the time. Anti-abortion, white supremacy, paramilitary—these separate categories aren't really so separate here. And that makes it hard to figure out."

But for at least some in the militia movement, the developments in Oklahoma seem almost a godsend. The program of "leaderless resistance" advocated by Louis Beam—a former Texas Klan leader and Aryan Nations theorist—bears striking similarities to what appears to have been the approach of the group responsible for the bombing. And the federal crackdown may purge the movement of those Beam considers amateurs.

Beam's document on leaderless resistance, first published in 1992, reads very much like a blueprint for the militia movement itself:

"All members of phantom cells or individuals will tend to react to objective events in the same way through usual tactics of resistance. Organs of information distribution such as newspapers, leaflets, computers, etc., which are widely available to all, keep each person informed of events, allowing for a planned response that will take many variations. No one need issue an order to anyone. Those idealists truly committed to the cause of freedom will act when they feel the time is ripe, or will take their cue from others who precede them."

But the program for "leaderless resistance" also sounds, at times, like a criticism of the militias. It counsels "avoidance of *all* contact with the front men for the federals—the news media." It demands that "patriots" break down into very small units of around a half-dozen guerrillas: "[T]he last thing federal snoops want, if they had any choice in the matter, is a thousand different small phantom cells opposing them."

Beam considers existing right-wing groups necessary but not capable of adequately challenging the government and

other forces of tyranny against "our race, culture, and heritage." Small terror squads—Beam's "phantom cells"—would be much more effective. "Those who join organizations to play 'let's pretend' or who are 'groupies,' " he writes, "will quickly be weeded out."

These ideas may well become more common within the militia movement after Oklahoma, as justifiable fears about infiltration join the more familiar paranoia about the New World Order.

Within 24 hours of the bombing, several militia leaders around the country claimed that the files on the Waco incident had been stored at the federal building in Oklahoma City. The statements appeared almost simultaneously: a tribute, perhaps, to the effectiveness of the fax networks.

And also a sign of how neatly events can be fitted into the conspiratorial scenario. As strange as the ideas of the movement seem to anyone not living in the universe of the militias, this much seems clear: It is a movement prone to violence, but remarkably resilient—and nothing if not imaginative. Shortly after the bombing, it had absorbed the event into its own ideology, once again finding evidence of federal tyranny. As the Militia of Montana representative I spoke with explained, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms sacrificed four of its own agents at Waco; why wouldn't they sacrifice a couple of hundred citizens in Oklahoma? He took my silence after this interpretation as skepticism. But in fact, I was just speechless.

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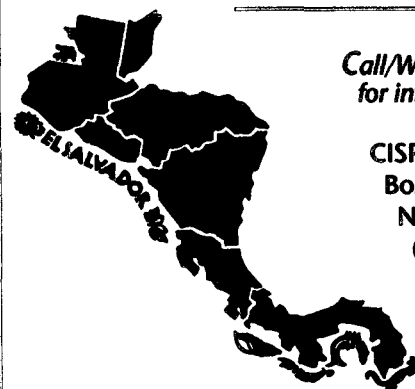
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**LABOR**

# Team spirit

*Despite  
old-guard  
opposition,  
Teamsters  
President  
Ron Carey is  
building a  
democratic  
union.*

By David Moberg  
CHICAGO

**I**n 1991, during his campaign for the Teamsters presidency, Ron Carey vowed to clean up the beleaguered union. Carey wanted to eliminate mobsters, embezzlers and other crooks not just for the sake of propriety, but because he believed that an honest and democratic union would work better for its members.

Despite a few early missteps, Carey—working with government-appointed overseers—seems to be carrying out his 1991 campaign promise deliberately and, on the whole, successfully. As a result, prospects for the future of both Carey's presidency and democracy in the union are stronger, but by no means certain.

Carey's opponents charge that he is using his executive powers in a campaign to punish critics. In any case, they argue, he should deal with the male-

factors quietly, rather than publicize their misdeeds. "If you find a kid in your family on drugs, do you call a press conference?" asks Chicago Joint Council 25 President William T. Hogan, who will likely run in 1996 for the No. 2 spot in the union on an opposition slate with none other than James P. Hoffa Jr. Hogan, like many of the old guard, believes that Carey is a government-controlled agent with a secret agenda "to destroy this union."

Hogan regards many of Carey's actions to clean up corrupt locals by appointing trustees to lead them as little more than "frivolous shit." Nevertheless, Hogan cites only a few examples of such frivolity and acknowledges that much of what Carey has done has been necessary. "Are some of [Carey's moves] justified?" he asks. "Absolutely. There was a need for some housecleaning." Yet the Hoffa/Hogan faction has fought against most such cleansing actions.

Nevertheless, Carey's public attacks on corruption suggest—to Teamster members and employers alike—that he is serious about changing the union. "For three years we've been sending the message that corruption has no place in this union, and where corruption raises its ugly head, we'll be cutting it off," Carey says. The public housecleaning has already improved the badly tarnished image of the union with the public, and is also serving to energize the rank and file.

Strategically speaking, Carey has been wise to remind union members of the association of his "old guard" opponents' with the union's sordid history of mob influence and corruption. Though most of the officials removed from office have been Carey's political enemies, so far neither government overseers nor outside observers see him as abusing his powers for political retaliation.

The assault on corruption in the union began long before Carey's election in 1991. For nearly two decades, Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and other rank-and-file groups have challenged union corruption and autocracy and have championed democracy as the cure. In 1989, to avoid going to trial on corruption charges brought by then-U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani, leaders of the union signed a consent decree with the Justice Department. The decree provided for an independent administrator to oversee implementation of the agreement, an investigator to look into allegations of corruption and an official who would run the union's first rank-and-file direct election of top union officials.

Many of the investigator's early targets included prominent union officials who had been long cited in government investigations as allies or members of the mob. By 1992 the investigator had filed charges against 214 individuals and three local unions, including more than 50 charges of links

to organized crime, with the vast majority resulting in permanent removal or lengthy suspension of the offender from the union.

After Carey's election in 1991, the administrator was replaced with a three-member Independent Review Board (IRB).

After reviewing reports on local unions and individuals prepared by the investigator, the IRB passes its recommendations for actions on to the union. Under the new procedure, charges have been brought against 76 individuals.

When Carey took office, he established a union Ethical Practices Committee, which both investigates and hears charges

against members. Carey has also repeatedly intervened to overturn tainted local elections. He has begun investigation of corruption in the handling of the union's pension and health and welfare accounts. Though these funds, typically overseen by a board of union and employer representatives, have been widely abused and plundered in the past, the IRB has no jurisdiction over them. In a couple of cases, the international union has filed innovative lawsuits to recover millions of dollars lost and stolen due to such abuse.

Carey's most potent anti-graft weapon has proved to be the imposition of trusteeship on corrupt locals. After receiving a recommendation from the IRB, or when the union itself discovers misdeeds—through audits of local finance, for example—Carey can step in to appoint a trustee, typically an international union representative or top officer of another local, to run the union until it is ready to govern itself again. Generally, this takes less than two years.

Most of Carey's trustees—he has appointed 45 so far—move beyond the tasks of removing crooks and straightening books to focus on the broader goals of educating members, training union stewards and improving contracts. It's not an easy task: Trustees find themselves attempting to nurture a democratic culture in union locals that have always been run like corrupt businesses, handed down from father to son. And there is always the danger that, without the support of newly informed and active members, the local could easily fall back into the hands of allies of ousted officials. That has happened in a few cases. But reformers, usually sympathetic to Carey, have won most of the post-trusteeship elections.

Chicago Teamster Local 705, with 14,000 members at United Parcel Service and a number of trucking companies, illustrates how difficult the cleanup can be. Former local union secretary-treasurer Dan Ligurotis, an international union vice president who ran on one of the two "old guard" slates that opposed Carey in 1991, was removed from office for embezzling \$120,000 from the local. (Ligurotis also shot and killed his son—he claims in self-defense—during a dispute at the local union headquarters.) Even after his ouster,

Ligurotis' successors and the union executive board—old allies of his—continued the financial shenanigans that had led to his ouster in the first place, giving him an illegal, interest-free loan to repay the missing funds, granting retroactive pay raises and bonuses and doctoring the executive board minutes.

In June 1993, Carey imposed a trusteeship on Local 705 and removed its officers. Union investigators discovered that the local had been operating in the red for seven years, losing money at the rate of \$1 million a year. They also found abundant examples of financial extravagance, ranging from closets full of expensive liquor to two bronze busts of Ligurotis—commissioned at a cost of \$14,000.

The trustees—Carey aide Ed Burke, followed by Gerald Zero, a Local 705 reformer who had been appointed as an international representative—moved quickly to clean house. They slashed exorbitant salaries, sold a fleet of Lincoln Town Cars and canceled expensive annual parties. They reduced the number of business agents and lowered their salaries (some previously paid as much as \$90,000 a year). They more than doubled the number of shop-floor union stewards, giving members more immediate and effective representation—at a fraction of the original cost. They expanded local publications, and more than tripled union meeting attendance—all while fending off disruptions and physical attacks by Ligurotis allies.

Zero also began to repair the damage caused by decades of corruption in contract negotiations. "From my background with other unions," trusteeship attorney Peggy Hillman explains, "the extent to which the whole system was corrupted was amazing to comprehend. Virtually every contract had some component about it that was corrupt. The grievance system was corrupt." At many companies, Zero discovered, Ligurotis' officials had not required employers to include all or even most of the workers under the terms of the contract. At many others, there were written or oral agreements that exempted the employer from fulfilling contracts. Zero began reforming the bargaining process by including rank-and-file members in all negotiating sessions and decreasing dependence on lawyers, who had run much of the local's affairs under Ligurotis.

Employers were not happy with the changes. One distraught business owner invited Zero to lunch at a nearby Italian restaurant. "He said, 'I always got along with Danny. We didn't have any problems. We didn't need a steward. What do you need? A car? Money? Women?'" Zero recounts. "I said, 'Just take care of the members and I'll be happy,' and I paid my part of the check and left."

The local's health and pension funds turned out to be even more of a problem. Ligurotis' successor, Gil Valerio, had arranged for a \$100,000-a-year position as a fund trustee before he was ousted from the union. Though the employer trustees consistently sided with the old guard, Zero eventually succeeded in removing Valerio. And, over the course of 20 months of investigation, Zero and his associates found evidence of corruption that had cost members

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**Teamster Local 705  
President Gerald Zero**

more than \$4 million over some six years.

In April, with the local's health in reasonably good order, the trusteeship came to an end with an election of new officers. Four slates ran, two hostile to Carey, including a "Real Teamster" caucus slate of local union candidates for which Jimmy Hoffa Jr. ardently campaigned. Zero and his ally John McCormick won with 39 percent of the vote. Counting the slate headed by international vice president Leroy Ellis, the pro-Carey forces won 55 percent of the vote in a local that had voted two-to-one against Carey in 1991.

The story at many of the other trustee-led locals (many of them in the New York/New Jersey area or in Chicago) is similar. The unions were plagued by financial corruption and the systematic suppression of members' rights to information and union meetings, voting on contracts and fair election of officers. Some locals were organized essentially as insurance-marketing scams, providing no union representation and even including many small business owners among those who received insurance through their "union."

It is hard for Carey's old-guard critics to attack his imposition of trusteeships in such instances, where the corruption is blatant. In arguing that Carey has acted politically, they typically cite only the trusteeship of Chicago's Local 743. The local was headed by Robert Simpson, an international union trustee who was opposed to Carey and had questioned the new president's financial management of the union. But Simpson, whose case is now under review by the IRB, was charged by the federal investigator with both financial wrongdoing and retaining ties to the local's former boss, who was accused of having links to organized crime. Members of Carey's staff argue that it would have been improper for them *not* to impose a trusteeship—and that looking the other way would make it appear that the union condoned local contact with mob-linked figures banned from the union.

Carey's record gets strong reviews from those opposing union corruption. Association for Union Democracy director Herman Benson calls the complementary union and government actions "a tremendous development in the union movement, completely underestimated." Both investigator Charles Carberry and IRB administrator John Cronin praise the union for acting promptly and properly and creating a

more open climate. "It's been a big change from 1989, a change for the good," Cronin says, "in terms of working with us, not fighting us every inch of the way."

While TDU organizer Ken Paff feels that Carey is heading in the right direction, moving "aggressively against corrupt locals and using [trusteeship] judiciously," he cautions that trusteeship historically has been a "tool of dictatorship." "Reform has to come from the members," he argues.

Reformers have won significant victories in local elections, but they have also lost some key votes—though often over parochial issues, like divisions among truckers and other teamsters, rather than the big question of union reform. Paff admits that there is no breakthrough flood of local victories, but Carey is encouraging local transformations by strictly enforcing election rules and by campaigning for his allies on a local level. (With Carey and Hoffa going head to head, reformers recently won a statewide Arizona local.) For example, pro-Carey insurgents lost an election by 100 votes in October 1993 at a local in northern Indiana whose leadership was handed down from father to son. Though 300 ballots were missing before the election started, Hogan's Joint Council refused to invalidate the results of the tainted victory. The international executive board ordered a re-run with mail ballots, greatly increasing participation and circumventing such tampering, and the reformers won, precipitating a wholesale revamping of local operations.

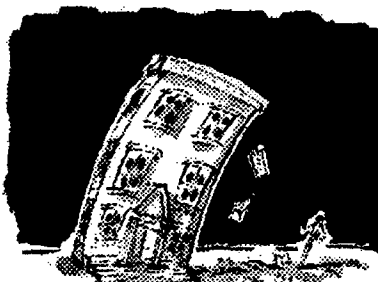
Ultimately, the Teamsters must rely on the dedicated involvement of the rank and file to assure democracy. Yet the cultural transformation of the Teamsters is still in its beginning stage. The union's convention next year will be a big test: If reformers fail to win a majority, they fear the old guard will undermine not only Carey's powers but also internal union democracy. The cleanup of the union's worst locals should give reformers the boost they desperately need. What happens over the next year and a half—leading up to the 1996 election—will profoundly affect the future of not only the Teamsters but also the entire labor movement. ◀

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**B L A C K A M E R I C A**

# The public mind

*The media  
debate over  
black public  
intellectuals  
neglects the  
deterioration  
of the black  
community.*

By Salim Muwakkil

**I**n early January, *The New Yorker* published a broad-ranging essay by Michael Berubé on the emergence of an influential new group of black intellectuals. Berubé argued that a new African-American intelligentsia has become an important part of this country's cultural landscape. He compared the advent of these black "public intellectuals" to the ascendancy of the New York intellectuals after World War II.

Berubé's piece, it turns out, was just the first stone loosed in a media avalanche. The March issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* featured a cover story on the "new" black intellectuals. *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Village Voice* have all followed with their own lengthy meditations on the black intelligentsia.

Who are these folks and why have they suddenly

attracted such media attention? And how does their growing eminence relate to the condition of the broader African-American community?

The term "public intellectual" generally describes a writer who, through media access to a general, educated audience, contributes ideas that help shape the discussion of important contemporary issues. Although such figures have long been prominent in American culture, public intellectuals are now mostly defined by a group of New Yorkers, primarily Jews, who from the 1930s through the 1950s clustered around the *Partisan Review* and strove energetically to play a leading role in cultural and political debate.

In his 1987 book, *The Last Intellectuals*, Russell Jacoby lamented the virtual disappearance of any intellectual concern with public life. "But no sooner had the last opinion piece about Jacoby's book been written than another group of intellectuals began getting quite a bit of attention," wrote Robert Boynton in his *Atlantic* piece. Jacoby's intellectuals were freelance writers, mostly male

and Jewish, but this current crop consists of academics, male and female, and black.

In Boynton's opinion they're also more ideologically diverse than were the leftish modernists who comprised the *Partisan Review* crowd. The African-Americans included in his list of public intellectuals span the political spectrum from hard-right conservatives to Marxists. Among their numbers are Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Stephen Carter, Stanley Crouch, Shelby Steele, Patricia Williams, Thomas Sowell, Michele Wallace and Ellis Cose, to name just a few. Despite their ideological diversity, Boynton claims to have found some basic similarities among them.

In general, Boynton argues that these black intellectuals are redirecting their attention from race-based identity politics to the importance of American citizenship for race relations. "That is," he writes, "they have thought less exclusively about the meaning of 'blackness' and more inclusively about what it means to be an African-American—taking pains to scrutinize both sides of the hyphen." They largely have rejected the "ideological straitjacket" of identity politics and victimology, he insists.

Instead, Boynton writes, these thinkers have concluded that the problems of African-Americans are inseparable from the problems of American citizenship. "The shift away from racial essentialism bridges ideological differences, with the more conservative thinkers being as likely to invoke the language of citizenship as left-leaning liberals," he argues.

Michael Berubé sees things differently. In his *New Yorker* article, he writes that black nationalism remains the "inspiration, the springboard, the template, but also the antagonist and the goad," of these new intellectuals. And while they have largely abandoned the cultural nationalism that was so

influential among black intellectuals in the late '60s and early '70s, Berubé notes that they remain committed to rethinking forms of African-American collectivity—a project that Boynton might associate, dismissively, with “identity politics.”

When critics summarily disparage notions of identity politics they are overlooking the realities of American history. The identities of African-Americans were originally forged in the cultural context of slavery and white supremacy. Thus, the hyphen between African and American connotes dueling as well as dual identities. The black nationalist quest has been an effort to settle that duel.

Although Boynton and Berubé differ on identity politics, both authors attribute the public emergence of black intellectuals to similar factors: Most are academics and thus are direct beneficiaries of African-Americans' increased access to higher education; they have unprecedented access to the mainstream media, both print and broadcast; and they have benefited from America's post-Cold War preoccupation with domestic racial issues.

Other articles on black intellectuals largely ignore the wide range of thinkers that Berubé and Boynton discuss and concentrate on a few major players who are more ideologically compatible. In the most abbreviated media summary, *The New Republic* narrowed the focus down to one, Cornel West. Although the publication announced the “Decline of the Black Intellectual” on the cover of its March 6 edition, author Leon Wieseltier focused his discussion on West exclusively. “Since there is no crisis in America more urgent than the crisis of race,” he writes, “and since there is no intellectual in America more celebrated for his consideration of the crisis of race, I turned to West, and read his books. They are almost completely worthless.”

This dismissive tone dominates Wieseltier's essay as he lays into West's major texts. Apparently, his rude devaluation of West's oeuvre is intended to indict the rest of the crew as well: If West is the best of the black intellectuals, then the lesser lights are lesser still.

Wieseltier's piece performs a useful role in shaking out aspects of West's cluttered ideology and turgid prose. And, as Ellen Willis pointed out in a *Village Voice* response to Wieseltier, “when black intellectuals are lionized instead of engaged, overpraised and discreetly undercriticized, it seems to me that what's going on is an insidious inverted form of Bell Curve-ism: ‘He's smart enough to get a Ph.D. and write books! Let's make a huge fuss!’”

Certainly, Willis is on to something. But since West also aspires to bring together a number of cultural roles—that of a deracinated intellectual, a well-rooted clergyman and a critical aficionado of pop culture—he makes an easy target. The breadth of West's work and his penchant for the sweeping theoretical synthesis infuriate critics concerned with finding hard political judgments in his muddled meanings. Much of West's writing teems with undigested notions, but West is reaching for new truths in uncharted territory. And, because his pioneering project lacks certain guidelines, sympathetic critics tend to indulge him.

West is also a primary focus of Adolph Reed's ire in a *Village Voice* piece titled “The Current Crisis of the Black Intellectual.” Reed's attack actually is aimed at a youngish group of black professors tied to cultural studies, who he claims self-consciously began using the term “public intellectual” to refer to themselves and one another. Along with West, Reed singles out four such figures for criticism: Henry Louis Gates Jr., Gloria Watkins (bell hooks), Michael Dyson and Robin D.G. Kelley.

Reed is contemptuous of their embrace of cultural politics, something he calls “don't worry, be happy politics.” He traces their pedigree to Booker T. Washington: Like Washington, they act as informants to notify whites about what is going on in the black community. More than that, Reed argues that they, like Washington, owe their prominence to the political impotence of the black community, “The idea of a free-floating race spokesman was a pathological effect of the disenfranchisement specific to the segregation era.” African-Americans are similarly demobilized and disenfranchised today, he argues. “The black public intellectual stance derives from and presumes a condition of political demobilization.”

The title of Reed's essay harkens back to Harold Cruse's classic work, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. Cruse's book, published in 1967, outlined the dilemma with admirable clarity: Since blacks lacked autonomous sources of legitimization and credibility, black intellectuals depended either on the white left or the reactionary white right for favors and legitimacy. Cruse urged African-Americans to concentrate on controlling their cultural institutions.

Reed updates Cruse's critique, but ironically he disparages the cultural arena as a suitable field of action. The attempts of the new intellectuals to synthesize disparate intellectual eddies, from high philosophy to hip-hop—what Berubé hails as the ability to “leap from Kierkegaard to KRS-One in a single bound”—draw fire from Reed as “a Pigmeat Markham-Meets-Baudrillard” coon show.

Some of Reed's anger seems to stem from philosophical intolerance. He wants West, Gates, Dyson et al to renounce their postmodernist perspective and come down to earth, where the real struggle is taking place. Well, yes and no. Just as Washington's role was more complex than is popularly understood, so are the struggles being waged by those Reed derides as poseurs. By wandering the postmodern landscape, these thinkers have, for example, gained new credibility for the discipline of Black Studies.

Another, perhaps more crucial, point is being overlooked in the media hubbub over black public intellectuals: Their increased visibility comes just as the public sphere is being steadily degraded. The addition of the word “public” to any institution instantly devalues it in our current cultural iconography: public schools, public pools, public transportation, public hospitals. These institutions are devalued in part because they are increasingly associated with minorities. In that sense, the rise of the black public intellectuals may represent less than it seems.



**SOCIAL POLICY**

# Altered state

*In New York,  
an unlikely  
coalition of left  
and right is  
pushing for  
drug policy  
reform.*

By David U. Andrews

**P**rospects for drug policy reform got an unexpected push from the right earlier this year in New York, when newly elected Republican Gov. George Pataki announced plans to soften the state's harsh drug laws.

Ironically, the conservative Pataki may, in a matter of months, achieve a goal that eluded former Gov. Mario Cuomo during his three terms in office. The Republican-controlled state Senate consistently rejected Cuomo's proposals to reform the infamous Rockefeller drug laws, which took discretion away from judges and forced them to impose sentences of 15 years to life on all persons convicted of dealing two ounces, or possessing four ounces, of any illicit drug. Since the laws were passed in 1973, New York's prison population has increased fivefold to more than 65,000 inmates,

about 60 percent of whom are now doing time for nonviolent crimes. During that time, there has been no appreciable decline in the social ills associated with the drug economy.

But Pataki's drug reform efforts are not motivated by a concern with the problems endemic to drug use. Like other governors who have promised to be both fiscally responsible and tough on crime, Pataki is trying to figure out how to incarcerate new convicts without busting the state budget. Instead of building new prison cells, he hopes to free up space by releasing some nonviolent drug offenders. To do this, Pataki aims to tinker a little with the penal code. He would make the 8,000 lowest-level drug felons eligible for immediate parole and allow judges to sentence similar offenders in the future to drug treatment or intensive parole. The plan, as such, is part of this year's state budget bill—which is currently on hold in Albany as Democratic legislators fight Pataki's plans to gut social services. Nevertheless, one Albany insider insists that the sentencing reforms will be contained in the final version of the budget. To ensure the reforms would receive sup-

port from GOP representatives, Pataki deftly brokered a back-room deal with legislative leaders, including state Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, an ardent death-penalty advocate.

Although the Pataki reforms are limited in scope, proponents of drug policy liberalization hope to exploit this political moment, and are moving to expand the range of policy options under consideration.

Ethan Nadelmann, director of the Lindesmith Center, a Manhattan-based drug reform think tank funded by billionaire George Soros, doesn't see a problem with liberals and conservatives working together on drug policy. "Many of the key issues in the drug policy reform agenda can be phrased in terms that are fundamentally in common with the conservative agenda," he says, noting that the reform movement has long included the likes of former Secretary of State George Shultz and conservative columnist William F. Buckley Jr.

The movement certainly has spawned some unlikely alliances. A recent meeting of New Yorkers for Drug Policy Reform (NYDPR) brought together old-style lefties and rogue academics in the salon-like atmosphere of a comfortable private dwelling near Central Park. A week later, gray-suited young Republicans hovered in a skanky beer-hall basement to hear Thomas Eddy, an ex-convict who had just finished serving 13 and a half years of a 15-year-to-life sentence for dealing two ounces of cocaine in the early '80s.

Eddy spoke candidly: "I was a drug dealer. There was no question. I was no prince." But he questioned the justice of a system that equates his actions with murder. Though he

approves of the direction Pataki seems to be taking, the reforms being undertaken in New York would not affect those convicted of felonies as highly rated as his own. At least 10,000 nonviolent drug offenders in New York will remain in prison mainly because their beds aren't needed.

The drug policy debate takes place on a curious ideological landscape—one where weird political currents have washed out familiar partisan divisions. Although Pataki might not come off as the type to consort with legalizers, there is one intriguing exception. One of his closest advisers is Wall Street millionaire Thomas "Dusty" Rhodes, president of the conservative *National Review* magazine, which has consistently editorialized in favor of drug policy reform. In 1991 Rhodes founded Change-NY, a well-heeled libertarian PAC that supported the campaigns of both Pataki and Bruno.

New York Democrats have questioned the motivations of Republicans like Bruno who opposed this kind of reform under Cuomo but support it now. "Last year they had one position, we know it was political," says Democratic state Sen. Franz Leichter, one of the few lawmakers left in Albany who voted against the original Rockefeller statutes. "They would have fought a Democratic governor tooth and nail and would have tried to gain political advantage by saying he's soft on crime. This isn't soft on crime at all. This is just being sensible on the expenditure of state dollars."

Paradoxically, along with his effort to free up valuable penitentiary space, Pataki has cut funding for drug treatment and programs that offer alternatives to incarceration. This will only complicate the implementation of penal reform. "The people who know the most about [alternative drug policies] essentially are the people involved in the drug policy reform effort, both the academics and the people working on the streets and in the programs," says Nadelmann.

Until recently doctors and lawyers, two potentially powerful pro-reform constituencies, have been reluctant to address the issue. But that may be changing. The New York City medical community came together in support of progressive drug policy reform for the first time at a symposium in March sponsored jointly by the New York Academy of Medicine, Beth Israel Medical Center, Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Throughout the day, speakers noted how in other industrialized countries physicians had led the revolt against

prohibitionist policies and in so doing had prompted rapid and radical transformation.

The physicians framed the issue from the perspective of "harm reduction." Harm-reduction policies like needle-exchange programs and alternative sentencing aim to lessen the negative impacts of drugs in society, without necessarily curtailing their use. It is a conceptual approach well-suited to the medical profession.

During the conference, Nadelmann rebuked the American Medical Association for not devoting one-twentieth the effort to educating the public on harm reduction as it spent battling health care reform in Congress. "Maybe the doctors haven't stood up. Maybe the doctors haven't responded to the ideological underpinnings that are responsible, supposedly, for their elevated status in society," he hammered from the lectern to eager applause. "First, do no harm," he continued, quoting the Hippocratic oath. "There are all these little internal cleavages and jostlings, but let's face it: We're



all for harm reduction."

New York City Health Commissioner Margaret Hamburg echoed Nadelmann. Reciting the familiar litany of social ills—poverty, violent crime, disease—Hamburg told the conferees: "Drugs are fueling all of these problems [and yet] harm-reduction strategies have not even crossed the threshold of the minds of a lot of policy-makers. The challenge is to reach out and begin to educate some of the newly

elected members of Congress, some of the newly elected governors." This was a surprising message to hear coming from an appointee of one-time federal prosecutor Rudolph Giuliani, now the Republican mayor of New York. When methadone advocate Stan Novick remarked from the podium that he felt like Dorothy at the Oz palace, he wasn't the only one perceiving the surreality of the event.

As for the barristers, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York last June issued a report, titled "A Wise Course: Ending Drug Prohibition," that suggested reallocating money spent on enforcement and incarceration to treatment, education and the administration of a regulated market. This June, the New York County Lawyers' Association Drug Policy Task Force, which includes 14 state and federal judges as well as academics and medical experts, will release similar findings based on two years of intensive study, according to Manhattan attorney Alan B. Fischler, chair of the task force. The findings recommend "broad, sweeping changes" and harm-reduction concepts, Fischler says.

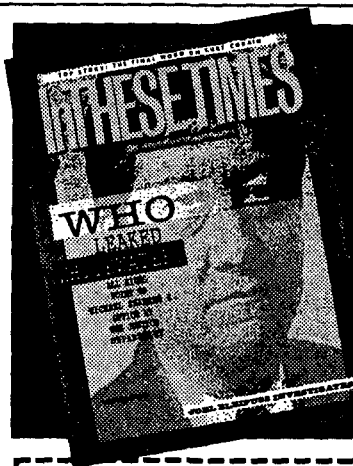
Though Nadelmann favors legalization or regulation, he is prepared to support whatever proposals that seem workable in the current political climate. "We want to work with people in government to make drug prohibition work better, but better from our criteria, not the drug warriors' criteria," he says.

Now may be a particularly auspicious time for New York to amend its drug enforcement strategy. Because policing is mostly a state and local matter, the state has considerable power to change drug policy regardless of the federal mood. Merely by loosening certain types of enforcement, New York could encourage—rather than unwittingly derail—an emerging trend in which cannabis is replacing crack on the street level, suggests Nadelmann. The state could also encourage the expansion of needle-exchange and methadone maintenance programs. Some of that may already be under way: Reportedly, district attorneys in more than one New York City borough write off possession of less than 20 vials of crack as a disorderly conduct violation instead of treating it as a serious felony.

But Pataki's small concession on nonviolent drug offenders hardly signifies a readiness to overturn longstanding assumptions about crime and punishment. Ex-convict Eddy worries about what happens to those left in prison. Pataki has coupled the early release program with such measures as double-bunking inmates and slashing recreation and education money for prisoners. On the outside it may sound like frugal policy, says Eddy, but in reality "they're going right back to Attica."

Nonetheless, David Crockett, the energetic head of NYDPR, presses on undaunted. "We're gonna shake [the Capitol] up like a house of cards," he says of his group's crusade in the state House. "If we succeed, it will send shock waves through the nation. It will show other states this can be done."

David U. Andrews is a freelance writer living in New York.



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**ECONOMY**

# The redlining menace

*A bill before Congress would strangle private investment in America's inner cities.*

By Peter Dreier

**F**lexing its muscle with the new Republican majority in Congress, the banking industry has launched a full-scale attack on one of the most effective community development programs in recent history. GOP leaders in both houses have filed industry-sponsored legislation that would gut the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), which since 1977 has been the catalyst for more than \$60 billion in private investment in inner-city neighborhoods.

Congress passed the CRA in an effort to combat redlining—the practice of banks refusing to make loans in older, inner-city and minority neighborhoods. Redlining has devastated urban communities across the country, leading to much of the blight that scars many American cities.

Community development groups now fear that the powerful banking industry—among the most gener-

ous contributors to congressional campaign coffers—will reverse almost two decades of progress. Last January, Senate Republicans put the CRA on its “hit list” of the 10 worst federal regulations. At hearings in March before the House Banking Committee, officials from banking industry trade associations claimed that the CRA requires mountains of paperwork and called it “quota lending.” Rep. Toby Roth (R-WI) called for the total elimination of the CRA, arguing that “it’s not needed, and it’s unworkable.”

As the hearing began, it was interrupted by 75 demonstrators from the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), a national community activist organization that has been a major force in utilizing the CRA to pressure bankers to make more loans in inner-city neighborhoods. When committee chair Rep. Marge Roukema (R-NJ) turned down ACORN’s request to participate in the hearings, the demonstrators began chanting “Save CRA” until they were escorted from the hearing room by the Capitol Police.

These fireworks are likely to be repeated at congressional hearings and local banking meetings across the country as the showdown over the CRA heats up this year.

At its most basic level, the CRA fight reflects a clash in views over the proper role of government in addressing social and economic disparities. Most bankers view the CRA as government intrusion into business, while community activists say it is needed to stop lenders from engaging in well-documented discriminatory practices.

Under the CRA, federal regulators rate banks according to how well they are meeting the credit needs of inner-city neighborhoods. Banks with poor CRA ratings can be denied permission to merge with other banks, engage in interstate banking, or open new branches. Regulators can also forward cases to the Justice Department, which can sue banks for civil rights violations.

Although CRA enforcement has improved under the Clinton administration, federal regulators under Presidents Reagan and Bush were far from vigilant. During the ’80s, the government was generally asleep at the switch. Despite persistent findings of widespread redlining, more than 90 percent of all banks received CRA ratings of “satisfactory” or “outstanding.” Even banks with poor CRA track records were rarely punished. As a result, community reinvestment activities primarily involved “bottom-up” enforcement. The CRA allows community organizations to file a “challenge” with regulators when banks request approval for mergers or other changes in their business. The banks, fearful that negative publicity might lead regulators to deny their requests, often choose to negotiate with grass-roots organizations in order to avoid noisy protests.

Even during the Reagan-Bush years, this process led many

reluctant lenders to forge "community reinvestment agreements" to expand loans to underserved neighborhoods and groups. In 1990, for example, after yearlong negotiations, Boston community groups reached a \$400 million agreement with the Massachusetts Bankers Association to expand lending, open branches and increase hiring in low-income and minority neighborhoods that had been systematically redlined for more than a decade.

As a check on the performance of regulators, some local governments and community groups draft their own "report cards" on banks' performance. Using data required by the 1975 federal Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA), they evaluate how well banks are doing in low-income neighborhoods. Some cities have adopted "linked deposit" policies, placing city funds in banks that receive good grades and withdrawing city monies from banks with poor track records.

In the late '80s, thanks to the work of ACORN—as well as the Center for Community Change and National People's Action, two other national community organizing networks—these local efforts became building blocks for a truly national movement that has produced dramatic results in the past few years alone. Now, community groups negotiate with multi-state banks and consortia of lenders.

Community groups regard the CRA as a success. The CRA doesn't require banks to make loans to unqualified customers, but to serve markets that have been previously neglected. Despite the claims of bankers, the act requires little bureaucracy and little paperwork. Federal Reserve Governor Lawrence Lindsey has said that the "CRA accounts for \$4 to \$6 billion annually being invested in low-income areas without employing a large bureaucracy." Thanks to the CRA, lenders have profitably invested at least \$60 billion targeted to working families and poor communities, according to the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, an umbrella group for CRA advocates. In doing so, the act has helped strengthen the tax base and improve the fiscal condition of many cities. These investments, primarily in housing, have created many jobs, expanded homeownership and stabilized troubled neighborhoods.

Many banks now work much more closely with neighborhood groups and nonprofit community development corporations. And most banks now have CRA staffs and special programs designed to satisfy bank regulators that they're complying with federal anti-redlining laws.

The CRA has also been a countervailing influence to the frenzy of bank deregulation and speculation of the '80s. Studies show that banks make a good profit on so-called "CRA loans." The Woodstock Institute, a Chicago-based nonprofit think tank, found that default rates for CRA loans are no higher than the rates for regular loans. And it's hard to find evidence that the CRA is battering banks' bottom lines. In fact, banks have recently posted record-breaking profits. Commercial banks earned more than \$43 billion in profits in 1993 and more than \$34 billion in the first three quarters of 1994. Ninety-six percent of all lenders were profitable last year. Indeed, if lenders (especially those in California) had

been making these kinds of loans during the '80s, instead of engaging in high-risk speculation, the nation may have avoided the costly S&L crisis and the taxpayer-funded bailout.

In fact, many bankers acknowledge that the CRA is good business. It has helped them tap into previously underserved markets and neighborhoods, where they have found good customers.

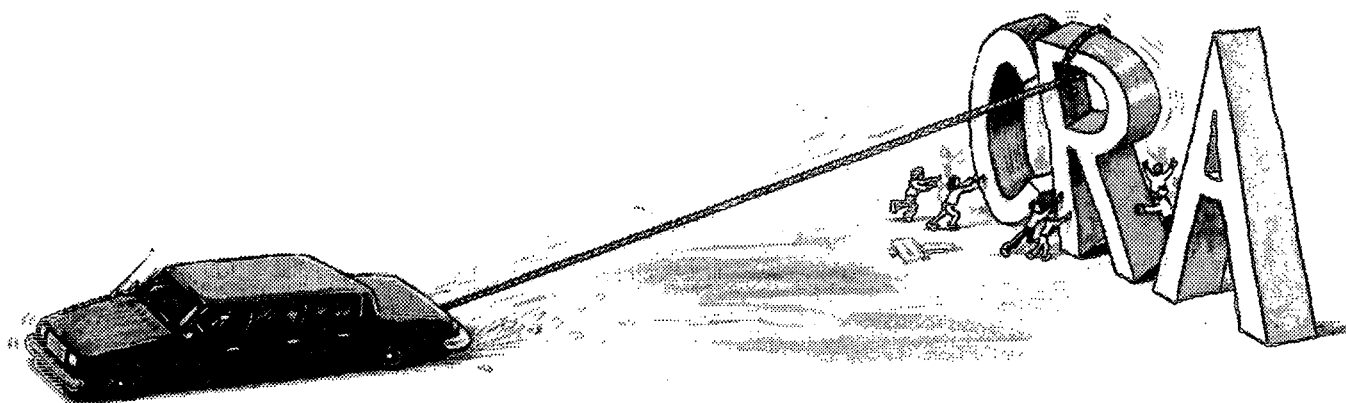
**B**ut despite its success, the CRA has not eliminated redlining in America. Studies of local mortgage lending during the past decade show that banks still provide fewer loans to minority neighborhoods than to white neighborhoods with comparable socioeconomic characteristics. Recently ACORN and other groups have exposed widespread redlining by insurance companies, an industry not covered by the CRA. And residential redlining is compounded by commercial redlining, which makes it even more difficult for small businesses to open or expand in inner-city areas. Small businesses, including minority-owned enterprises, continue to face unequal access to credit.

Prior to 1991, it was difficult for mortgage studies to gauge discriminatory lending practices precisely because the federal HMDA law only required banks to provide information disclosing the locations of their loans. However, recent improvements in the law—sponsored by Rep. Joe Kennedy (D-MA) and aggressively supported by community activists—now require banks to provide specific information about the race, income and gender of individuals receiving loans. Studies based on this new information have made some disturbing discoveries.

Using 1990 and 1991 data, the Federal Reserve Board looked at the rates at which banks accept and reject mortgage applications from white, black and Hispanic consumers. The first study examined 5.26 million home loan applications made nationwide in 1990, and also looked at the data for 19 metropolitan areas. The study found that banks rejected blacks and Hispanics for home mortgages more than twice as often as whites with similar incomes. The second study, conducted a year later, found the disparities remained the same. A study by the *Wall Street Journal*, published in February and using 1993 data, found that disparities between whites and blacks had not improved.

Faced with this evidence, the banking lobby argued that the studies failed to examine differences in "credit-worthiness" between black and white applicants. But an October 1992 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston undercut the bankers' claims. It looked at the credit-worthiness of applicants in the Boston area to determine whether racial disparities in rejection rates could be explained by differences in wealth, employment and credit histories, debt burdens, or other factors. It found substantial disparities between white and minority lending patterns, even when personal financial histories were virtually identical.

The banking industry's shortsighted attempts to gut the CRA would only compound these problems. The mechanism for gutting the CRA is a bill sponsored by Sens. Richard Shel-



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by (R-AL) and Connie Mack (R-FL) in the Senate and Rep. Doug Bereuter (R-NE) in the House. One part of their proposal would exempt from the CRA all banks with less than \$250 million in assets. This covers roughly 88 percent of all lenders. Another part would exempt 94 percent of all lenders from challenges by community groups and local governments, thus eliminating public participation and review in the CRA process.

President Clinton has been a much stronger supporter of anti-redlining laws than any of his predecessors have been. Clinton carried out his campaign pledge to strengthen the CRA and to push the nation's four bank regulatory agencies to take the CRA more seriously. The Clinton Justice Department has also upped the ante on CRA enforcement and prosecution. Recently, for example, the Justice Department won a major victory against Chevy Chase Federal Savings Bank, the largest thrift in the Washington, D.C., area. Armed with evidence that the bank had systematically engaged in racial bias in its lending practices, the Clinton administration forced the bank to sign an \$11 million settlement to open more branches in minority neighborhoods and to offer below-market mortgages to black applicants.

Soon after taking office, Clinton asked federal regulators to rewrite the rules to make them less vague and to grade banks on their performances, not promises of new programs. In late April, the Clinton administration unveiled new CRA regulations that would require banks to report all their small business loans, which community activists predict will help their neighborhood economic development efforts the way the CRA has already bolstered affordable housing.

But some bank regulators, including Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan—no CRA fan—have pressured Clinton to eliminate some of his more aggressive measures. As a result, the administration recently yanked some of its proposals to strengthen the act—dropping proposed fines of \$1 million a day for negligent banks and nixing requirements for banks to report the race, gender and specific location of small business loan recipients.

Although the banking industry is generally opposed to the CRA, it is divided over which strategy to pursue. Giant

lenders, who dominate the American Bankers Association, have learned to live with the CRA and forged working relationships with community organizations. They want to streamline the CRA by loosening the standards for judging compliance, but they don't call for its wholesale elimination. At a Washington news conference late last month, executives from Bank of America, Chemical Bank, Nations Bank and Home Savings of America—flanked by representatives from community activist groups—announced their support for Clinton's new CRA regulations. But small and medium-size banks, represented by the Independent Bankers Association of America, continue to take a harder line: Most of the anti-CRA proposals in Congress would exempt these institutions.

The banking industry's opposition to the CRA is not simply the typical business sector complaint about regulation and paperwork. The industry is undergoing a major restructuring. In the past decade, the banking industry has become increasingly concentrated. By century's end, most banking experts predict that roughly a dozen "super-banks" will dominate the nation's financial industry. Moreover, the Clinton administration recently moved to spur that consolidation by unveiling preliminary plans to eliminate legal barriers that have separated the nation's commercial banks, securities firms and insurance companies since the enactment of the Glass-Steagall Act in 1933. Banking lobbyists do not want civil rights groups and community organizations to use the CRA to obstruct banks' ability to purchase and merge with other banks and financial institutions.

But the CRA is not just a way of fighting racism and urban decay. It is also an antidote to the frenzy of deregulation that brought us the disastrous S&L bailout. Unless Congress learns that lesson, the banking industry may again lead the nation into a financial disaster—one that diverts our resources and energies from the pressing problems facing urban America. ◀

Peter Dreier is professor of politics and director of the Public Policy Program at Occidental College in Los Angeles. He serves on the advisory board of the Resolution Trust Corp., the federal agency overseeing the S&L cleanup.



# I N T H E A R T S

## After the revolution

**S***trawberry and Chocolate*, the latest offering from Cuban director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (aka Titón), has won popular and critical acclaim on a scale unprecedented for Cuba's film industry. It netted an award at Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival, an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film, and widespread distribution from both Redford and Miramax Films. But while the film is an impressive breakthrough for Cuban cinema, it is also, in less obvious ways, a bittersweet farewell to the tradition of Cuban revolutionary cinema—a movement Titón helped found in the '60s—as well as a pained and largely unresolved meditation on issues of sexual identity under Castro's notoriously repressive polic-

***Titón's latest film is a bittersweet farewell to Cuban revolutionary cinema.***

By Ilan Stavans

ing of the Cuban gay community.

The film is also important in that it speaks to Titón's recent experience as an exile from Castro's Cuba: His recent bout with cancer forced him to leave the island before the movie's completion, leaving the movie in the hands of Juan Carlos Cabio, a young, irreverent Cuban filmmaker. Titón traveled to the United States for treatment, and now that his health problems have somewhat abated, he has become a Spanish citizen and is working on two new films. Titón's return to Europe—as a young man, he studied film at Italy's Centro Sperimentale—is being greeted as treason by his former compatriots in Cuba and as a triumph of personal will by the Cuban exile community.

But both responses reduce his departure to a political act, ignoring its creative dimensions. To judge by *Strawberry and Chocolate*—especially in the context of Titón's earlier work—the director's exile comes not a moment too soon, at a time when he is wrapping up his major artistic obsessions. Tempted to conceive of freedom in different terms—to perceive the Iron Curtain from the other side—Titón has broken with his formal, cinematic past, even as many of his thematic concerns remain unchanged.

In an interview some 20 years ago, Titón was asked about the advantages he saw in working under a state-owned film production system like Cuba's. Such working conditions were challenging but also incredibly rewarding, he replied. "I imagine that is a very difficult thing for the majority of people living in a non-socialist country to understand," he added. "They find the idea of giving up certain limited bourgeois freedoms to be a very painful one because they are unable to conceive of freedom in any other terms. For me, their point of view has very grave limitations." He went on to explain that artists under communism in Cuba enjoy much greater freedom because they are "in control of what they are doing," whereas under capitalism, the "system based on unequal exercise of power and influence *always* works in the favor of the most powerful."

And yet the Cuban system has always posed grave limitations of its own for Titón's work—notably, limited funding and state censorship that have conspired to make the time between his completed projects very long. Hiatuses of five years and longer have separated one film from the next. Still, ever since his first feature, a documentary-style work on the miserable conditions of mine laborers called *The Charcoal Worker* (done in collaboration with Julio García Espinosa), Titón has always remained loyal to unraveling the enigmas of Cuba.

One of his classic works, *Memories of Underdevelop-*

ment, nicely drew out his ambivalence about the role of the artist in Cuba by including, near its end, a celebrated TV speech Castro delivered at the dawn of the Cuban missile crisis. "No one is going to come to inspect our country," Castro pronounced, "because we grant no one the right. We will never renounce the sovereign prerogative that within our frontiers we will make all the decisions, and we are the only ones who will inspect anything." Along with the other artists of Cuban revolutionary cinema, Titón took Castro, somewhat courageously, at his word—proceeding to understand Cuba from within, and then examining its contradictions from a more universal standpoint. In the process, he analyzed the role of the nation's intelligentsia and studied, in cinematic terms, Cuba's ethnic and ideological background. All of Titón's films—from the historical work *The Last Supper*, which explores the tension between Christianity and Afro-Cuban religion, to light comedies such as *Letters from the Park* (based on a Gabriel García Márquez story)—delineate the island's struggle with its own conflicted cultural identity and the revolutionary excesses of the Castro regime.

*Strawberry and Chocolate* brings these same themes to bear on the issue of homosexuality, loosening and abandoning many of the conventions of Cuban revolutionary cinema along the way. Titón's new film parodies romantic Hollywood styles and subverts gender stereotypes to create a cast of Cuban characters at once brave and introspective, all quintessential Westerners deeply rooted in Cuba's hybrid cultural tradition.

The film sets out to re-evaluate Cuban machismo, approaching questions of sexual identity and gender differences bravely, free of inherited taboos. Its appearance has more or less coincided with the international uproar surrounding the autobiography of the late gay émigré writer Reinaldo Arenas. Arenas' book *Before Night Falls* contends, among other things, that at least two-thirds of Cuban men have had a gay experience but will do anything to deny it. And Arenas is only the most visible member of a growing community of Cuban homosexual artists. Others, like writers José Lezama Lima, Severo Sarduy, Virgilio Piñera and Senel Paz, have suffered persecution under Castro's repressive policies toward gays. Paz wrote the original story and

screenplay for *Strawberry and Chocolate*.

Compared to Arenas' memoir of the severe repression and repeated torture he suffered in Cuba because of his sexual preference, Titón's film is tame. While Titón does address the atmosphere of intolerance, prejudice and bigotry that surrounds Diego, the film's gay protagonist, he includes no scenes of terror or physical violence. Nonetheless, like Arenas' book, *Strawberry and Chocolate* generated a huge controversy both within Cuba and beyond. Some sources in Cuba have claimed that the Castro regime's initial response was simply to withhold the film from both domestic and international distribution. But a resistance movement soon began, and government censors changed their minds: The movie was widely screened in

Cuba and endorsed as the nation's entry for the Oscars. The regime's reversal was more than a little calculated—its acceptance of Titón's timid rendering of gay repression is a cheap way to quiet the gathering uproar over more militant statements like Arenas'.

Gay groups abroad, particularly throughout the Hispanic world, have denounced the regime's about-face. They contend that Havana has acted hypocritically, endorsing a comparatively light treatment of the plight of

Cuban gays while still subjecting them to widespread harassment and sending them to concentration camps to "reform" themselves. The distribution of Titón's film, they argue, creates the false impression that glasnost is under way for Cuban gays.

While the film itself may not usher in a new age of tolerance, it does shed some valuable light on some of the tensions—both personal and political—of gay life under Castro. Jorge Perugurría plays Diego, a sweet and flamboyant gay man, a dilettante with a baroque apartment in downtown Havana. Thanks to Perugurría's candid, compassionate performance, Diego is the movie's main attraction.

The plot, however, revolves around David (Vladimir Cruz), a younger man, apparently straight, whom we meet in the movie's first scene—a sexual liaison with his girlfriend that he is unable to consummate. In the next scene, she gets married to another man, and David finds himself alone, wandering around a park. At this point he encounters Diego, who starts courting him. Their bumpy association provides the core of the film's thematic agenda—an exposé of the falsities and incongruities of Cuban com-



*Strawberry and Chocolate*  
Directed by  
Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

munism. In spite of his loyalties to justice and equality, Diego, the film implies, will always be perceived as undesirable, an unacceptable element in society. He will be ridiculed and tormented so that others can find solace in their so-called normality.

The other central character is Nancy, a prostitute and amateur *santera* played by Mirta Ibarra, Titón's wife in real life. She is Diego's neighbor, counselor and close friend, offering him advice in his pursuit of young David.

Soon, however, Nancy discovers she is also attracted to David, and a rivalry between her and Diego unfolds. This plot twist offers Titón the opportunity to shape Diego as the film's unquestionable hero and the voice of Cuba's conscience—a role he fills bravely and ebulliently. At one point, Diego characterizes Castro as "Cuba's only voice" and describes the nation's culture under him as saddening and desolate. His courtship of David proves abortive: Diego is forced to leave the country—but not before he invites Nancy to fulfill his own hopes of initiating David into the pleasures of sex.

In spite of the film's courageous engagement with the issues of gay identity under Castro, the overall mood of *Strawberry and Chocolate* is gentle to the point of virtual harmlessness. While the political denunciations in the film are welcome, they strike the viewer as flat and limited. Titón is only ready to go so far. It's a hesitancy that prevents personal expressions of gay sexuality from being anything more than harmless, as well. Unlike Hector Babenco's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, in which the gay and straight protagonists seal their intimacy with a kiss, *Strawberry and Chocolate* climaxes with a hug—at once a sign of departure and a non-threatening affirmation of gay male sexuality. And the plot's resolution of the crisis in David's sexual identity comes across as innocuous and naive.

But for all its many imperfections, *Strawberry and Chocolate* is endearing. As a farewell to Cuban revolutionary cinema, it successfully evokes the great demons against which Titón once fought. And in one sense, it remains true to the revolutionary aesthetic: It subverts and questions Cuba's own archetypes of masculinity and sexuality by turning its protagonists into fragile creatures ready to defy old certainties. It is, in many ways, a fitting point of departure for the director's new dilemma of exile. Cuba, no doubt, will remain the heart of his work, but his new vantage on it will pose a considerable challenge. José Martí once talked of two Cubas: one in the island and the other outside. Will they finally prove to be one and the same? Titón might have the answer. ◀

Ilan Stavans, a novelist and critic, teaches at Amherst College. His forthcoming book is *Bandido: Oscar "Zeta" Acosta and the Chicano Experience* (HarperCollins).

## Latin American cinema's new lease on life

**T**he international success of *Strawberry and Chocolate*, Latin American cinema's new lease on life, is more than a tip-off that political winds are shifting in and around Cuba. It is also one of many indications that filmmakers throughout Latin America are creatively confronting a central challenge of the '90s: to deliver high-quality, socially relevant entertainment.

In the '60s and '70s, the so-called New Latin American Cinema Movement emerged as a major artistic expression of a politically charged era. Rallying to the slogan "Cinema as a gun," filmmakers rejected the gaudy, soapy, singing-and-dancing movie traditions of Latin America's prolific film studios. The "engaged cinema" of the period so alarmed the military dictators of Latin America that they drove many filmmakers underground, into exile and into the ranks of the "disappeared." (Cuba, with its nationalized film industry and post-production facilities, became a refuge for many.)

By the mid-'80s, with democracy beginning to return in many parts of Latin America, moviegoers craved lighter entertainment, which American producers were only too happy to provide. The region's unstable austerity economies also sabotaged many film production budgets. By 1990, film production throughout Latin America had plummeted.

But to judge by a careful selection of recent Latin American cinema at the Sundance Film Festival in January, many filmmakers are discovering how to keep audience attention while also using the wide screen as a platform to raise important issues. *The Silence of Neto*, directed by Guatemalan Luis Argüeta, is an elegantly designed historical family drama, featuring a winsome young boy who comes of age during the CIA-backed overthrow of the democratic Arbenz government in 1954. The boy's first experiments with independence have a dynamic, subtle relationship with the political drama suffusing the film. By contrast, in the intense Chilean film *Amnesia*, directed as an actors' tour de force by veteran Gonzalo Justiniano, politics is front and center, when a political prisoner and his keeper meet by accident two decades after the prisoner's release.

Humor, always a precious commodity, laces through recent productions, whether in the small, affectionate jokes of *Strawberry and Chocolate* or the broad farce of the Mexican *Two Crimes*, which spins a fast-paced tale of mistaken identity and misappropriated inheritance. The Colombian *Eagles Don't Hunt Flies* (which, along with *Strawberry and Chocolate*, captured the Sundance award for Latin American cinema) also displays an arch wit. Sergio Cabrera dextrously balances the viewer between suspense and delight as he reworks a sturdy formula: a duel between two provincial men bound by honor. Cabrera comments with one eye cocked on the history of violence and machismo in Colombia, but never strays from the movie's compelling story-telling voice.

Offerings like these are welcome evidence that films you can talk about after leaving the theater don't have to be punishing while you're in it—and dues to the energy of a re-emerging Latin American cinema.

—Pat Aufderheide



# IN PRINT

## Bringing the war back home

By Terry Anderson

Already the fodder for countless op-ed pieces and talk-show debates on Vietnam, Robert McNamara's *In Retrospect* has prompted yet another painful public re-examination of the country's longest war. Many commentators have treated McNamara's reassessment of Vietnam as a plea for personal forgiveness. There's no denying, of course, that McNamara's guilt is considerable. Thirty years ago, I joined the Navy and served in Vietnam because men like McNamara forcefully proclaimed the war both just and necessary. Former soldiers and antiwar protesters have good reason to greet his memoir with anger, disbelief, even disgust.

But to focus exclusively on McNamara's mea culpa is to overlook the book's considerable historical value. Whatever McNamara's motive for coming forth with *In Retrospect* now, the book is in many ways a remarkable, thoroughly documented journey through the misguided policies and political blunders that led the United States to get involved and remain in Vietnam. The truths that McNamara offers about the war effectively bury the neoconservative revisionist interpretations of Vietnam. No sober reader can mistake McNamara's war for Ronald Reagan's "noble cause."

Instead, *In Retrospect* presents the war as a study in the hubris of America's governing elite. Far from being a failure of political will, the escalation of the war in McNamara's narrative emerges as the result of decisions made by arrogant Defense Department intellectuals and New Frontier leaders—the "best and the brightest." The posture of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations ensured that all important decisions about the war would be insulated from public scrutiny and accountability at home—and, most tragically, from the facts on the ground in Vietnam.

This mode of policy-making made an early impression on McNamara. In his third week in office as Kennedy's secretary of defense, reporters asked him about the "missile gap," the supposed Soviet lead over the United States in the number of nuclear missiles. During the 1960 election, candidate Kennedy had skewered Vice President Richard Nixon and the Eisenhower administration for allowing the Soviets to develop their alleged advantage. When asked about the controversy, McNamara replied simply, with the truth: "If there was a gap, it was in our favor." The press went wild, and Republican senators called for his resignation. McNamara recounts that Kennedy stood by him and privately exonerat-

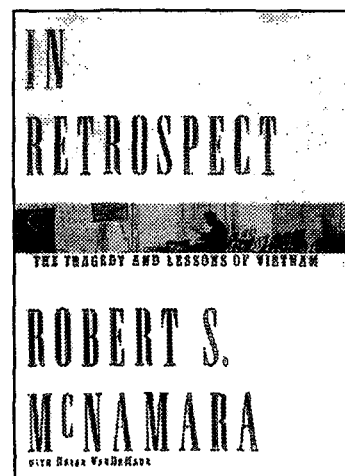
ed him. "I never forgot," he writes, "the generous way [Kennedy] forgave my stupidity"—the stupidity, apparently, of telling the truth to the American people.

*In Retrospect* does grapple with the truth about the war—and that alone sets it apart from the many self-serving accounts of Vietnam that other policy-makers have produced to preserve their reputations. As history, it draws extensively on previously published documents—chiefly the research McNamara commissioned on the progress of the war that later became *The Pentagon Papers*. (It should be noted, by the way, that by praising and using those documents, McNamara contradicts himself when he writes that there were "good and honest reasons" for the war in the first place. The papers, which examined the reasons troops were committed to Vietnam, proved exactly the opposite.)

While McNamara's sources may be familiar ground for historians of American foreign policy, they do represent a significant departure among statesmen's memoirs. For example, when Nixon published his views on the war in 1985, *No More Vietnams*, the former president fabricated a host of "facts" to prove his revisionist position. (Ngo Dinh Diem, for example, was not, as Nixon wrote, "a popular anti-French nationalist," but a Catholic dictator in a Buddhist nation. Nor was it the case, as Nixon would have it, that a "small minority" of antiwar protesters were not Communists.) Nixon and other revisionists simply aim to demonstrate that others—especially members of Congress—were to blame for the tragedy of Vietnam.

The particulars of McNamara's inside view of policy-making in the Kennedy and Johnson era are especially revealing. According to McNamara, the Kennedy administration uncritically embraced the Cold War doctrine that communism was a monolithic force in the world, poised to topple the "domino" countries of the less developed world. Indeed, McNamara writes, Kennedy's policy-makers regarded a fallen South Vietnam as a threat to America's national security.

Contrary to the public statements of McNamara and other officials of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, there were never any "special secrets" that justified intervention on national-security grounds. And McNamara says the administration "totally misjudged" South Vietnamese President Diem. Even when forced to confront this error, the



**In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam**  
By Robert McNamara  
Times Books  
414 pp., \$27.50

Kennedy administration was still unwilling to modify the war's misguided Cold War rationale: After planning the coup d'état that led to Diem's assassination, Washington continued to issue a flow of reports to the public that McNamara now admits were "too optimistic." The assessment of popular resistance to South Vietnam's regime suffered from much the same political obtuseness: "We also totally underestimated the nationalist aspect of Ho Chi Minh's movement," McNamara writes.

McNamara makes many more remarkable admissions. The best and the brightest often shared a shocking ignorance of the corner of the world they were stumbling into. Before taking office, McNamara writes, "I had never visited Indochina, nor did I understand or appreciate its history, language, culture or values." The same was true of the rest of the Kennedy and Johnson advisers. By pedigree and habit, the advisers of Kennedy and Johnson casually assumed they knew more than anyone else. How could they lose to a peasant country like North Vietnam? McNamara's story is one of the blind leading the blind—a deadly policy for soldiers in rice paddies.

U.S. policy was just as misguided from the standpoint of military strategy. McNamara admits that Gen. William Westmoreland's "search and destroy" strategy was inappropriate to use against the Viet Cong; the bombing was "ineffective." Ultimately, he shares the blame with LBJ "for consenting to fight a guerrilla war with conventional military tactics against a foe willing to absorb enormous casualties in a country without the fundamental political stability necessary to conduct effective military and pacification operations. It could not be done, and it was not done."

Even though McNamara concludes that "the foundations of our decision-making were gravely flawed," *In Retrospect* still suffers from some of the Kennedy era's characteristic blind spots. McNamara does not see any irony, for example, in JFK demanding that his advisers read Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August*, the story of how Europeans stumbled into World War I—a war and culture that had about as much to do with Vietnam as Desert Storm.

At times, McNamara deceives himself. He tells the reader continually that he, Kennedy and Johnson felt that it was "a South Vietnamese war," one that the South had to win for itself. He doesn't recognize that the historical record tells just the opposite story: JFK increased the number of advisers from about a thousand to 17,000, and McNamara himself helped LBJ escalate the number of U.S. troops to more than half a million, changed their mission from advising to combat, and thus Americanized the war.

McNamara shoulders a still greater responsibility for the silence he kept once he left office and moved on to the presidency of the World Bank. Since the publication of his book, McNamara told *Newsweek* that when he resigned, a month after the shocking debacle of the Tet Offensive of 1968, "My voice wouldn't have made a difference" in ending the war.

Nonsense. Tet forced a massive change in public opinion. For the first time a majority of citizens shifted from support-

ing the war to considering it a mistake. All credible political candidates in 1968 called for an end to the conflict. While the Democrats called for disengagement, Richard Nixon boasted that he had a "secret plan." As McNamara remained silent, activists were burning their draft cards, standing trial for breaking Selective Service laws, and some 40,000 were beginning to pack their bags for Canada. If there ever was a time to stop the war, it was in 1968, when all of America realized that continuing to prosecute it would prolong it for many years to come. A secretary of defense declaring that the government held no secret information, admitting mistakes and condemning the war would have had an enormous impact on the course of the nation.

At times, *In Retrospect's* presentation of the facts is frustrating. McNamara writes that "we actually began planning for the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1963," but drops this topic with little documentation. In fact, of course, his administration did the opposite. He also raises the question of what Kennedy would have done if he had lived—another form of Vietnam revisionism popularized by Oliver Stone's film *JFK*. Like all of JFK's former advisers, McNamara admits that Kennedy never told him, but states that "he would have pulled us out of Vietnam." Again, he provides no documentation of the claim.

It takes no great feat of the imagination to see why Kennedy would have resisted any proposal to withdraw. Pulling out would have resulted in a communist victory. Kennedy, the ardent Cold Warrior who approved Eisenhower's plan for the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion—and who during the Cuban missile crisis brought the world closer to nuclear Armageddon than any other American president—was a poor candidate to play the prince of peace in Vietnam. The historical context of Kennedy's administration alone should dispel such illusions: Conservatives had jeered the previous Democratic president, Harry Truman, for "losing China," so it is inconceivable that Kennedy wanted to be remembered as the president responsible for "losing Vietnam." Nor did Johnson, nor Nixon, nor Ford. That was the problem—all the war's commanders in chief believed their own Cold War rhetoric, and none had the courage to admit a mistake.

By the end of the book it is clear that McNamara is claiming victory for his former enemy—not the North Vietnamese but all those activists who took to the streets and protested the war. He respected them, he admits, and they had an impact on him; indeed, McNamara's own son protested his father's war. In 1967, he was confronted by his friend Jackie Kennedy, who suddenly exploded, beat him on the chest, and cried out, "Do something to stop the slaughter!"

But he did not, even though he now admits that the war was not in the country's national interest: "The war was wrong, terribly wrong." With Vietnam so deeply entrenched in the American psyche, this won't be the last word on the war—but it should be.

Terry Anderson, a professor of history at Texas A&M University, is the author of *The Movement and The Sixties* (Oxford, 1995).

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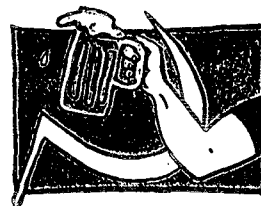
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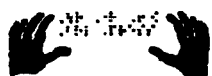
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Continued from page 40

year, there's the dreaded "Structured Christmas/Chanukah Gift Giving at Work."

*Free Inquiry* wants to appeal to people it characterizes as "free-thinking individuals." (Contributors include entertainer "Steven Allen" and "The Late Isaac Asimov.") The *Fighting Back* promotion seems a little misguided: It's clearly directed at people who haven't free-thought their way to handling these incidents on their own. You'd figure that the people who once supplied *The 700 Club* with a regular dose of terror would be able to handle everyday social intercourse.

Seventy years ago, when John Dewey and Bertrand Russell and Clarence Darrow were in their primes, it was a heroic stance to reject the shallow gods of the day. Science and reason still held a lot of promise. But the years between 1925 and 1995 have demonstrated that what has been offered to us as reason—the cost-effectiveness of dumping toxic wastes, eugenics, the need to stockpile nuclear weapons, and so much more, is anything but rational. Instead of facing up to these challenges and other, more overtly political threats, humanists are still using catch phrases and buzzwords associated with the religious apologists of the Victorian era.

I guess there will always be people who, after reading Ayn Rand or watching *Inherit the Wind*, will seize upon religion-debunking as the best proof of their own cleverness. So, instead of lengthy coverage of things like Pat

Robertson's telethons for Third World mercenaries, or born-again dictator Ríos Montt's reign of terror in Guatemala, the humanists would dwell on whether Jesus was real and what kind of epilepsy the apostle Paul suffered from. They're always looking for the "magic bullet," the question that will get fundamentalists to see the flaws in their beliefs, reject their creed, and convert them to a New Life. It's a worldview that strangely mirrors that of evangelical Christians. The problem is, humanists have a very stodgy evangel.

So here's some help for any troubled secular humanists out there. An invitation to a wedding? Fine: Bring a present, say "Mazelto!" when the glass breaks, and, when drunk, try not to throw up on the bridesmaids. The dinner guest wants to say grace? *Let him*. The kids ask about a religious holiday? *Explain* it to them. Someone says "God Bless you?" Say "Thanks." How hard can it be? Hell, you could even have fun with assaults on your freedom. Someone says "Sex is Dirty?" Reply, "That's why God gave us bathhouses." Missionaries ring the doorbell? C'mon free-thinkers, be creative. Tell 'em you're busy screwing a German Shepherd. Oh, there is one short chapter, toward the end, titled "You or a Loved One Physically Blocked from Entering an Abortion Clinic." It's three pages long—about half as long as the "Sex is Dirty" chapter. I hope it at least mentions bullet-proof vests.

Brian Siano is a freelance writer from Philadelphia and a former editor and columnist for *The Humanist*.

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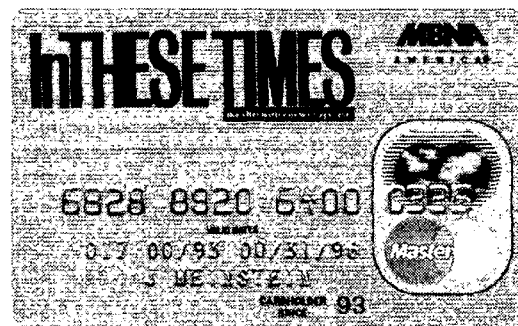
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I N T H E E N D

# Humanist error

By Brian Siano



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Remember secular humanism? It used to be the scourge of America—at least, if you asked Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, or their legions of followers about it. They described secular humanists as a coterie of atheist evildoers, Communists and university professors, single-handedly responsible for poverty, feminism, welfare, sex and violence, teenage pregnancies, homosexuality, rock music, and abortion.

That was 10 years ago. Today, Congress is run by the Christian Coalition's pit bulls. Pat Robertson, once known for his hurricane-steering, is a major power broker in the Republican Party. And the pro-life crusade has spawned a manual titled "Ninety-Nine Ways to Stop Abortion." Circulated samizdat since 1992, the pamphlet outlines dozens of hilarious pro-zygote pranks. Some are strictly at the frat-boy level, like putting Krazy Glue in the clinics' door locks; the more Khomeiniesque suggestions include encouraging the

terminally ill to use their cheaper lives for the greater good—by firebombing clinics in their remaining days. "Maybe the Spirit of God has been hounding you to take certain actions on behalf of his children, but you have not obeyed," the manual says. "Here's your last chance."

So between the evangelical rank and file anticipating the Apocalypse, and heavily armed citizen's militias working overtime to actually bring it about by blowing up government buildings, times have changed, and for the worse. So we might take a moment to ask ourselves: what are the secular humanists up to these days? How are they responding to these new, terrifying threats?

*Free Inquiry*, the house organ of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism in Buffalo, N.Y., is offering what its editors must think is a pretty hot premium to new subscribers. A 100-page book, titled *Fighting Back! A Manual for Free Thinkers*, purports to "turn the tide for free-thinking individuals who are tired of the abuses and indignities hurled at them." "It's one thing to read philosophical essays on Secular Humanism," the ad copy reads, "and quite another to react *one-on-one, in-person* to people or situations aimed at taking away your liberties and rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution." Each chapter is devoted to an event that, I guess, the average secular humanist regards as an assault on his

or her rights as a citizen. Such as someone saying "'God Bless You' When You Sneeze." This infringement of your constitutional rights can now be repelled, simply by consulting chapter one. Chapter two ventures into trickier territory: "Answering the Question, 'What Happens When You Die?'" One of the longer chapters (six pages) addresses "People who say 'Sex is Dirty,'" and then there's that intrusive, un-American question of "Did You Have a Merry Christmas?" taking up chapter three. Well, *did* you?

The life of a secular humanist, as outlined by the trials and tribulations described in *Fighting Back*, must be one of continual, unendurable persecution. Those "Invitations to Weddings and Other Functions that Include Religious Ceremonies," must be excruciating.

"Prayers at Public School Graduations and Sporting Events" pound into their skulls like sledgehammers. Once a

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